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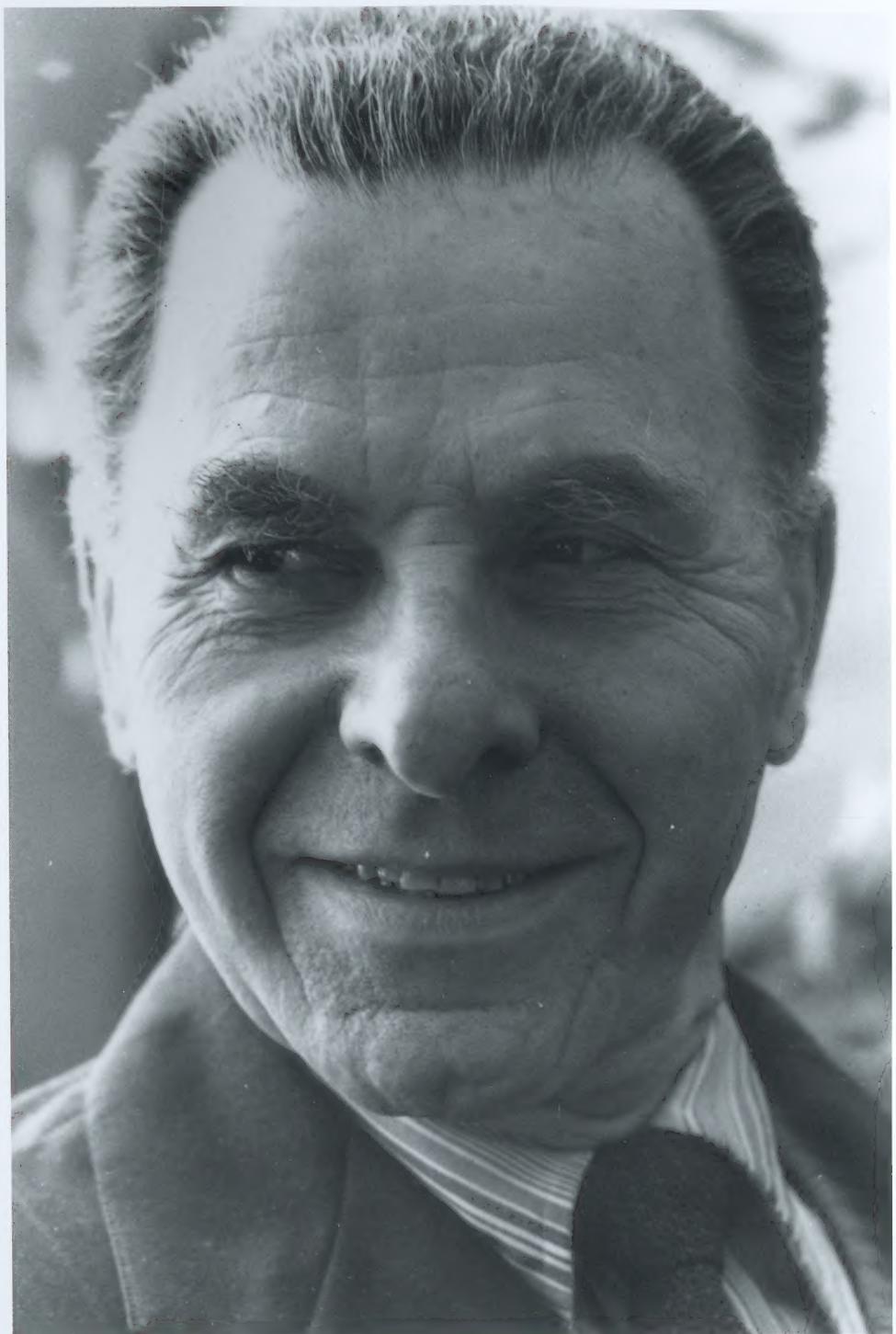












328 WAGNER

## ART HISTORIAN

Julius S. Held  
Interviewed by Taina Rikala de Noriega

Art History Oral Documentation Project

Completed under the auspices  
of the  
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Art and the Humanities

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

### PERSONAL HISTORY:

**Born:** April 15, 1905, Mosbach, Germany.

**Education:** University of Heidelberg, 1923, Humboldt University, Berlin, 1923-24, 1927-28, University of Vienna, 1925-26, 1929; Ph.D., art history, University of Freiburg, 1930.

**Spouse:** Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held, married 1936, two children.

### CAREER HISTORY:

Assistant, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, 1931-33.

Lecturer, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1935-41.

Carnegie lecturer, National Gallery of Canada, 1936-37.

Lecturer, art history, Barnard College/Columbia University, 1937-44; assistant professor, 1944-50; associate professor, 1950-54; professor, 1954-70; chair, Department of Art History, 1967-70; professor emeritus, 1970-present.

Visiting lecturer, Bryn Mawr College, 1943-44.

Visiting professor, New School of Social Research, 1946-47.

Visiting professor, Yale University, 1954, 1958.

Member, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University, 1967.

Robert Sterling Clark Professor of Art, Williams College, 1969, 1974; visiting professor, 1973-82.

Andrew W. Mellon Professor, University of Pittsburgh, 1972-73.

### AFFILIATIONS:

American Friends of Musée Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, president, 1969.



Art Bulletin, editorial board, 1942-present.

Art Quarterly, editorial board, 1959-74.

College Art Association of America, director, 1959-64;  
honorary director, 1975.

Deutscher Verein für Kunsthissenschaft.

Medieval Academy of America.

Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico, consultant, 1959-present.

Renaissance Society of America.

Société de l'histoire de l'art français.

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Carnegie fellow, 1935.

Special advanced fellow, Belgian American Educational Foundation, 1947.

Guggenheim fellow, 1952-53, 1966-67.

Fulbright fellow, 1952-53.

Honorary D.H.L., Williams College, 1972.

Honorary D.Litt., Columbia University, 1977.

Art Dealers Association of America Award, 1980.

Medal of Distinction, Barnard College, 1980.

Governor's Award, State of Vermont, 1982.

Honorary D.F.A., Dickinson College, 1983.

Honorary Ph.D., University of Heidelberg, 1985.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS:

Dürers Wirkung auf die niederländische Kunst seiner Zeit.  
The Hague: Nijhoff, 1931.

Rubens in America. Catalog of paintings and drawings by  
Rubens in American collections. New York: Pantheon, 1947.



Flemish Painting. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1953.

Peter Paul Rubens. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1953.

Paintings by Rembrandt. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Miniatures, 1956.

Rubens: Selected Drawings. London: Phaidon, 1959.

Rembrandt and the Book of Tobit. Gehenna Essays in Art, no. 2. Northampton, Massachusetts: Gehenna Press, 1964.

Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and Other Rembrandt Studies. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Art: Baroque Painting, Sculpture, Architecture. With Donald Posner. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971.

The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Flemish and German Paintings of the Seventeenth Century. Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1982.

Rubens and His Circle: Studies by Julius S. Held. Edited by Anne W. Lowenthal, David Rosand, and John Walsh, Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

### INTERVIEWERS:

Taina Rikala de Noriega. B.A., Art History and Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz; M.Sc., Architecture, University College, London; Ph.D., Urban Planning, UCLA.

Richard Cândida Smith, Associate Director/Principal Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Theater Arts, UCLA; M.A., Ph.D., United States History, UCLA.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

**Place:** Held's home, Bennington, Vermont.

**Dates, length of sessions:** June 24, 1991 (104 minutes); June 25, 1991 (240); June 26, 1991 (76); June 28, 1991 (80); October 29, 1992 (107).

**Total number of recorded hours:** 10

**Persons present during interview:** Tapes I-VII, Held and Rikala; Tapes VIII-IX, Held and Smith.

### CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This is one in a series of interviews intended to examine the development of art history as a professional discipline and conducted under the joint auspices of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and the UCLA Oral History Program.

The interview is organized chronologically, beginning with Held's childhood and education in Germany and continuing on through his work at the Staatliche Museen, his departure from Germany in the 1930s, and his career as a professor at Barnard College in the United States. Major topics covered include Held's art historical training, his struggle to make a career for himself in his early years in the United States, the art history departments at Barnard and Columbia University, Held's work as consultant to the Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico, and his research interests and emphasis on connoisseurship.



EDITING:

Rebecca Stone, editorial assistant, edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Held reviewed selected portions of the transcript and made minor corrections and additions.

Teresa Barnett, senior editor, prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history. Stone compiled the index.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Also preserved in the archives is a tape-recorded talk given by Held at Bennington College on May 26, 1991. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 24, 1991

RIKALA: We usually start with the simplest question, which is when and where were you born?

HELD: I was born on April 15, 1905, in Mosbach, a small town in Baden, in Germany. Baden of course today doesn't exist--not independently anymore. It's not an independent state. It's Baden-Württemberg, it's one of the states of the Federal Republic [of Germany]. Two of the older units were fused into a new state, Baden-Württemberg. And so that's where I was born, and I went to school there. Should I say--?

RIKALA: Sure. Why don't you tell us about your school, your education.

HELD: You have to remember it's a small town. There was only one higher school; there was what's called the Volksschule, the basic training. Usually if your aim was to go into the higher school, you stayed about three and a half years in the primary, or elementary, school, three and a half years, and then you would go into the higher school. The higher school was called Realprogymnasium, which was not a full-- You know that Gymnasium, the word Gymnasium, in Germany it doesn't mean sports and things.

RIKALA: It doesn't translate.

HELD: It's a higher school. In fact, Gymnasiums usually



were schools in which classical languages were taught, Greek and Latin. I did, in that school, study Greek and Latin, too. The school only went to the end of the seventh grade, but there are nine, and so I had to transfer at the end of that school when I had gone through the seventh grade. Then I had to leave Mosbach and go to Heidelberg to finish the last two years of high school in a Gymnasium in Heidelberg. That was a hard thing because the school in the small town was not really as good in education--especially in some fields like Greek and Latin--as the full Gymnasium. So I had a little trouble when I went to Heidelberg.

RIKALA: How old were you at that time?

HELD: Well, let me think for a moment. I think I went to Heidelberg when I was fifteen. I graduated from the Gymnasium at Heidelberg when I was seventeen. Then I began university. Now, the school in Mosbach, I should perhaps say something more about it. We had Latin from the beginning, but you must remember that those were war years. When the First World War broke out, I was nine years old, and almost immediately some teachers were drafted into the army. So in that first year, some ministers of the local churches came to teach class. My first teacher in Latin was the Catholic priest of the town. Now, they were all nice people, but they were not really, perhaps, the best teachers. So in the first year, I began with Latin. Latin



I had the longest. But then the third year I began with French and the fourth year with Greek. So I had, in that town, these three languages, but the level of education was not really quite as good--especially under the circumstances during the war--as it should have been, perhaps could have been. Then, as I said, I left. As a high school student, I had to rent a room in Heidelberg.

In those years, sports were more important to me than academic studies. I was active in all kinds of sports, and also rowing. But then when I graduated, I decided to go to the university, and the logical thing was that I would go in Heidelberg, right there. During the years, the two years, when I was a student in Heidelberg, I had also gone to listen to professors at the university, lectures at the university. Because they were open; you could walk in. No one asked you whether you had registered or anything.

[laughter] So I'd heard already at that time some of the more prominent professors at Heidelberg University. There was a man, [Karl] Jaspers, he was in philosophy, but he came from medicine. He gave a course in experimental psychology, for instance. When I was a high school student, I would go and listen to philosophy, a Kantian professor of philosophy [Rickert]. So I decided to enroll in Heidelberg.

In my first semester, I actually enrolled as a student of philosophy. That didn't last very long because in that



very class, in the very seminar where I was enrolled-- You know, in German universities at that time, you could enroll immediately in seminars. You didn't have to go just for-- like our undergraduates--general lecture courses. And so the studies were almost immediately highly specialized. The education system here is quite different. In that same seminar, there was another student who was so brilliant that I thought he must be close to his doctorate. Then one day I talked to him, and it turned out he was also first semester just like I. [laughter] By the way, he is now emeritus professor of philosophy at Columbia [University], Professor [Paul Oskar] Kristeller. Our friendship goes back to our first semester in Heidelberg. So the fact that he knew so much more and was so much more alert and experienced in philosophy-- I changed to the preference which I've had all along, namely art and art history. So I began in my second semester, which was no longer in Heidelberg, but was in Berlin [Humboldt University]. I began studying art history.

RIKALA: And in Berlin it was under [Adolph] Goldschmidt?

HELD: Well, you see, I went to Berlin for one semester, then began this traveling around. The first semester was Heidelberg. The second semester was Berlin. The third semester was [University of] Freiburg. It is Freiburg where I eventually also took my Ph.D. So I started at Freiburg and took also there some seminars. There I wrote my first



major paper in art history on the tower of the minster of Freiburg. You know the word "minster," because some of these medieval churches are called "minsters" because the towns didn't have a bishopry.

RIKALA: Did you study under [Hans] Jantzen?

HELD: Jantzen. That paper was written for Jantzen. Walter Friedlaender was also there in Freiburg, and there were other people--archaeologists and so on.

RIKALA: How was art history taught? Did the professors use slides?

HELD: It was from the slides. But the most important activity, from the very beginning, was in seminars. Usually small groups, where students wrote reports, and the reports were discussed. It was a sort of give-and-take situation. There were, of course, lecture courses too, but I remember more some of the lecture courses in Berlin than in Freiburg. Of course, in Freiburg, I think Jantzen probably talked on medieval architecture in lecture courses. But another thing that you should know is that you never felt that you really had to attend every lecture. It was rather freewheeling, the whole system. No one checked. At the end of the term, you had a little book and you went to your professor. He just put his name down whether he had seen you before.

[laughter]

RIKALA: That's very different.



HELD: He just agreed that you had been in his course. I remember I took a course, a seminar, on history. I wrote a paper on the relationship of seventeenth-century Dutch art to Dutch history. That was for a historian.

RIKALA: Was that in Berlin or--?

HELD: In Freiburg. Then I went to Vienna. I was motivated in those travels by the desire to see as many museums as possible. Mainly some of the major museums. So that's why I went to Berlin and Vienna. Those are places where, of course, enormous collections have been accumulated. And so, incidentally, I also studied. But I spent more time in museums looking at the works than I probably did in the lecture halls. As I said, the lecturers confirmed whether I had been there or not.

RIKALA: Let's go back to your family a little bit in Mosbach. Can you tell me about your family background? What did your father do?

HELD: They were business people. My father [Adolf Held] was born in Mosbach. My grandfather was Moritz Held, and he had married the daughter of a local businessman whose name was Altmann. The business of my family in Mosbach was founded in 1827 or 1828, something like this, by Samuel Altmann. Then he had several daughters, one of whom married Moritz Held, who then changed the name of the firm from Altmann to Held. Then my father took over, and my father



married the daughter of another businessman--a smaller businessman than the Mosbach one had been--from Eberbach, a town nearby.

Of the two, my father and my mother [Nannette Seligmann Held], my mother was the much better businesswoman. I heard that much later. My father had always wanted to be a teacher. He didn't want to be a businessman at all. But of course the whole career and whole life of my father was entirely vitiated, in a sense, by the First World War. You see, my father had grown up in the business.

My father and mother got married, I think, in 1902. Then they had a child, my older sister [Ida Held Bloch], who is now dead, who was born in 1903. I was born in 1905. Then there were two more children, my brother [Alfred Held], who was born in 1908, and little sister [Johanna Held] in 1913. Both of them died relatively young. My brother died at age ten. The first one to die was the little girl. She died in 1915 almost as a victim of the war, you might say. Well, I don't want to go perhaps into all these details.

But in 1915, when I was ten years old, my father was drafted into the army. And he came home from the war in 1918 a sick man of terrible kidney complications because of the way soldiers, of course--

RIKALA: Were treated poorly?

HELD: He died in 1919. My mother had already taken over



even during the wartime, when he was no longer there. Then she became ill, and she died in 1926. So, by that time, both my younger brother and sister were also dead. They're all buried in Heidelberg, by the way. So then my older sister, two years older, and I were alone. The business then was my sister. In 1926 when my mother died, I interrupted my studies for a whole year because I had the feeling "Well, I have to perhaps turn and become a businessman myself and help them." For a whole year I was there, and then everyone-- My sister and also some relatives-- An aunt of mine lived there, and then an uncle lived there for a while and helped in the business. They said, "You'd better go back to the university. You are not very good help." [laughter] So then I returned to the university and I went once more to-- I can't remember the sequence. I really sort of went back and forth from Vienna to Berlin. I was probably more in Berlin than I was in Vienna, but not in Freiburg anymore until the end. When my dissertation was finished, then I had to study for my orals in Freiburg. It's different from here. The orals, I think, are given here first, and then the dissertation has to be written. Over there it was different. You took your orals after your dissertation had already been accepted. Then you took orals. So in 1930 I had finished my dissertation and had been accepted, and then I took the oral exams, which



were in history, archaeology, and art history.

RIKALA: So were you and your sister, then, out of circumstance, quite close?

HELD: Yes, of course. Since I was back at the university and my sister was not only nominally alone, although she had the help of her employees-- The business usually employed about six people.

RIKALA: What kind of business was it?

HELD: It was dry goods and women's clothing, that kind of thing. Dry goods that you measure out in yards, or meters, and so on. For a small town, it was a relatively large business. It was probably the leading firm in town that sold this kind of thing.

Then my sister married. The man whom she married [Max Bloch], he was a very good person. He was quite a wonderful man--very simple in his own way, but experienced and energetic and so on. He of course had plans, big plans, for the business, but then came Hitler.

So in 1933, April 1-- It was an infamous day. All the Jewish businesses were boycotted, and storm troopers were placed in front of the door. My sister and brother-in-law, by that time they had a son [Ariel Bloch], a small boy. They realized that they couldn't stay there. So in 1936 they emigrated to Palestine, which at that time was called Palestine--now Israel, of course. The name Israel didn't



exist at the time. So they moved there. They were able to move some of the necessary things, furniture and so on. They had to sell the house cheaply. These were difficult years, as you can imagine. Later on, when the war was over, they made some claims. Because they had really sold a piece of land and the house and the business under duress, they never really realized what it was worth. So they did get some money back. I mean, you never get back what you lost, but to some extent they got some Wiedergutmachung, as they call it. I didn't get anything because I-- I was in an unfortunate position as far as the laws of the new German government. People could claim restitution, people in my position, for two reasons. Either that they say, "We were interrupted in our studies. I couldn't finish and get my degrees"-- The other one is that they lost a firm employment, if they had fallen out of a job they had, let's say a teacher or something, or an employee in a university. Then he could claim also that his career had been disturbed and destroyed. I fell between those two. I had finished all my studies. I had the Ph.D., but I had not yet at that time a paid job. I had worked for two years on a voluntary basis in the Berlin museums [Staatliche Museen]. So that didn't give me any rights. I couldn't make any claims. Well, I managed. But it's curious how such things happen.

RIKALA: Did your family have a strong Jewish identity?



HELD: Not really. My mother was more committed, let's say. For instance, you may know this, that a Jewish family that is really Orthodox must have a kosher household.

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: You know that. My mother saw to it that the household was kosher at least. For the main reason that her father [Zacharias Seligmann], who was more Orthodox than even she, that he could come and visit. You see, my grandfather on my mother's side would not come and eat with us if the household had not been careful. So for that reason, she did. My father, and his father already, had no Jewish--No great interest. I mean, they didn't change their faith, but they did not-- They were conscious. I mean, in a sense, the way I am. I know I am Jewish, but I do not take part in religious exercises. I am supporting the local synagogue, but I am not going there.

RIKALA: What's your mother's family name?

HELD: Seligmann, Nannette Seligmann.

RIKALA: Did you grow up with a religious education?

HELD: No. Do you know about bar mitzvah?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: You know it. I was bar mitzvahed. I had to learn certain Hebrew texts which I was able to sing, songs at the bar mitzvah, and so on. For instance, when my father died, I would go regularly to say kaddish prayer in the synagogue.



So all this I did because in a small town--there was a Jewish community of perhaps 120 or so people--it was expected that you show your reverence to the tradition. On the high holidays I would go to the synagogue. Yom Kippur I would fast. But I never learned Hebrew in any sense that I could understand it or write it or anything.

The rabbi of the Jewish community in Mosbach was a very learned man. He decided at one time that the children above a certain age should learn more about Jewish history. There were only three children in that age group that he wanted--my sister, a friend of hers, and I. We met and worked in his study, and he tried to teach us. But it was a very unhappy situation which blew up one day when I started laughing and I couldn't stop myself laughing. He took one of his big books and hit me with it and threw me out. I was irreverent, and that stopped. So, in other words, I have no real Hebrew.

But my nephew, the son of my sister, is making up for that. He is a professor of Arabic in Berkeley. He grew up in Israel. He grew up there learning, of course, as his first language, Ivrit, or Hebrew. Then he learned fluently Arabic. He's very fluent in English and German because he later studied in Germany. So he has all the languages that one could possibly learn. He is married and has two sons and a wife. He lives in California. His name is Bloch. My



sister's married name was Bloch, and this boy's is Ariel Bloch, that's his name. He's well known in his field as an Arabist. At the moment, he and his wife [Chanah Bloch]-- She is a poet and professor of English, by the way, in-- What's that college in California? She is professor in-- I can't think of the name. A girls college, I think it is.

RIKALA: Mills? Mills College?

HELD: Is there another? Mills. Could be Mills. Is there another?

RIKALA: I'll have to think about it too. We'll come back to it.

HELD: Together they are going to now translate the Song of Songs into English.

RIKALA: Oh. That's very lovely.

HELD: So. The Hebrew education was not so much religious, but Jewish history and language and so on. He is a real linguist in every respect.

RIKALA: What kind of political orientation did your family have? What were the politics of Mosbach?

HELD: Well, I don't know how much you know about the political organization of Germany. When the revolution of 1918 broke out, the first president of the new German republic was a socialist. The socialists were never strong enough to have a majority, and so the government was usually a kind of-- What is it called when several parties go



together?

RIKALA: Coalition?

HELD: Coalition. So there was a democratic party. The socialists were at the left. Very soon, there began also a very small communist party. But the communist party never had a real influence on the government. They were numerically relatively weak. The socialist was the major party. Then came the democrats, which were smaller, but in coalition they had a certain influence. In the center of the spectrum was the Catholic party. The Zentrum it was called; the Zentrum, they were in the center. Then at the right wing, there were nationalist parties--Deutschnational, "German National"--and of course eventually also Nazi. Gradually the central party gained more power, but it all ended really--I can't go into all the details--with the kind of coup almost that Hitler staged in Berlin with the Reichstag fire, the fire in the Reichstag and so on. Of course by that time, a rightist named [Paul von] Hindenburg had become president, and he turned over the power of Germany to the Nazi regime.

My mother and father both had been elected--well, my father while he still lived--to the town government as the democratic-- Which is half left, which means the center and the socialists. They were not socialists, but they called it the democratic party. I myself was more close as a



student, as a young man, to socialist. I joined a paramilitary organization called Reichsbanner. It was not really military, but it was in support of the socialist movement.

RIKALA: Did this organization meet? Did you have group meetings?

HELD: There were meetings. You see, it was really an organization intended to counteract the sort of military or paramilitary organizations of the right. You know, the rather militant attitudes of the rightist parties, which grew, of course, more during the twenties. Of course, at that time, you saw already that the militarism itself had begun to grow, although the Treaty of Versailles wanted to keep Germany peaceful and weak. But secretly they began, of course, already to rearm in that period. And the Reichsbanner was founded. They had marches and that kind of thing.

I also was at that time a member of a student organization of academicians. People in our town. There were of course lawyers and doctors and all kinds of people who had university studies behind them. They had formed a kind of social club, you might call it, for academicians of the hometown, you know. I knew most of these people, and I joined them too. Basically, they were mostly rightists, you see. So there were tensions in that group from the



beginning. They were rightists, and quite often I had the feeling they were also anti-Semitic. There were social evenings. We would sit together, talk and drink and so on. And one day the Reichsbanner, to which I also belonged, had a big celebration in town, a big parade. I, as a member of the Reichsbanner, had been requested with others to see that order should be kept. I had to keep order in the streets, you know, that kind of function. In the same evening, this particular group of graduates--

RIKALA: The academics.

HELD: They had arranged a demonstrative drinking evening. One could foresee there would be trouble. You know, they tried to-- What is it, to--?

RIKALA: Antagonize maybe? Or is that too strong?

HELD: Yeah, almost challenge. They wanted it as a kind of challenge. What happened is that they got themselves drunk, and they went out and got beaten up. I was then, in that group, in that small group, charged with not protecting my brothers in that organization. First of all, I wasn't there when they were beaten up. I couldn't be everywhere. But I must say, I thought it served them right. And so I left that group.

RIKALA: Didn't want to be part of it.

HELD: My political ties were stronger than my social ties to the academicians in my hometown. Now, what have we not



covered about my youth?

RIKALA: Well, you mentioned that you were interested in looking at art when you were at university. Did your family have--?

HELD: I had begun to draw at an early age. I can show you a few things if you would be interested.

RIKALA: Oh, I would like that. Yes.

HELD: As a matter of fact, I thought maybe I'd become an artist when I was in high school. That resolve weakened when I went to Heidelberg. I told you-- The last two years of my high school, the Prima years--Unter- and Oberprima they called it--I did in Heidelberg. In my class in Heidelberg was a Russian émigré. We are talking now about 1918, 1920. In Germany there were at that time quite a number of refugees from Russia and the Baltic provinces, who had left because of the communists in the Bolshevik takeover. In my school in Heidelberg was one of these young Russians, who was actually two years older than I was at the time because he had lost some time coming from Russia. He was such an excellent painter that I thought, "Oh, I can't compete with that." But I began to get into studying art history while I was in high school. So when I then as a student realized that philosophy was perhaps not my cup of tea, the old idea of doing art history had-- But I had drawn a lot, and I kept drawing even at later times still, up to a



certain point. Now I don't do it anymore. It might amuse you that my drawing teacher in Mosbach, when I was still there, told me, "Julius, you will be my successor one day."

RIKALA: Oh, that's very nice.

HELD: I don't know how serious I took it, but I've never forgotten it. I have, of course, since I mentioned my grandfathers-- I have portraits hanging of them which I drew. You walked already by them.

RIKALA: I'll have to take a look.

HELD: So my interest in art history began early. In fact, I think my father may have had something to do with it, because when he realized that I had a little gift for drawing, he bought me a beautiful book with reproductions of famous works of art. I still think I have it probably. I copied from that book many of the famous works of art. Among them I made a drawing of the Sistine Madonna by Raphael, which they produced in that book and I made a copy. I told you the Catholic priest was my first teacher in Latin. We remained a little in touch, and sometime a little later--but I was in school--I thought he might like to have that drawing, so I gave it to him. And he had it framed and he hung it in his study. He told me, then, one day on the street-- He stopped me and said, "Julius, I have to tell you something. One of my colleagues, a Catholic priest from another town, visited me and he saw your copy of the Sistine



Madonna. He looked at it and said, "Oh, the expression of the Madonna, the Virgin, is more beautiful here than in the Sistine Madonna," which he had seen in Dresden.

RIKALA: How nice.

HELD: I can't accept that. Then, of course, I stopped copying and did some drawings. I did drawings of my hometown. I went around Mosbach, and it's a lovely old town. I can show you some things from there. I made a number of drawings, many of which have disappeared. I gave them away, and I didn't bring everything out. I remember one drawing, which I am sorry I can no longer trace, because the town has changed a good deal in some areas. That's another story, which I'll tell you perhaps at another session. I had reason to contact the current architect of the town, the town architect. One day I showed him some of the drawings that I had made, and he said, "They're very interesting to us because we know how the town looked at that time." I also took some photographs, and I gave them to him also, because my children wouldn't be interested in that kind of thing. He said one of the photographs solved a riddle which they could never solve, because they knew there had been a fountain in a certain place, but it was no longer there because of the many changes. I had photographed that fountain, so they knew now what it had looked like and where



it had been. The reason why I have contact with my hometown--it is fairly close in some respects--I will perhaps tell you in another session.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JUNE 24, 1991

RIKALA: Perhaps you could describe how the faculties were set up at the university and the approach. How really one studied at these universities. If you could travel from university to university, how did you ever make a program of study?

HELD: It was completely freewheeling. There was no one who told you anything or guided you. You just went through the offerings for the term. You got the book, the program book, and then you registered for certain courses, and of course you would register only for a limited number of courses. There was no limit set by the university, but you had to pay a certain amount for each course that you took, and so you kept that down to something that you thought you could do and handle. As I told you before, there were lecture courses and seminars. The real work was done in the seminars. There were never exams. You know, even in seminars, you wrote a paper for the seminars. There was never an exam, and for the lecture courses, it was absolutely unheard of. Which meant a curious burden at the end of your studies, because you had never taken an exam before. You had absolutely no practice in exams. So you prepared yourself for your oral exams--which were the first exams you took and the last ones, the first and the last--



without knowing really how much you would have to know or how it was handled. No written exams.

RIKALA: Who would be on this oral committee? Who would be the professors on the oral exam committee? Your dissertation--?

HELD: You wrote your dissertation, and your "dissertation father"-- They used that word. The dissertation father is the one who gave you the major examination. All these examinations were face-to-face between the professor and you. They could extend for some time, but normally, apparently, they were not too long. Surely an hour would be the minimum. And you were a little nervous. I mean, without ever having been confronted by the professor, you were apprehensive. Well, in the end, it went all very well with me. In retrospect, all the agony is forgotten.

RIKALA: Who took interest in your development? Do you remember professors being interested?

HELD: You were on your own. You were on your own. There are students who procrastinated and went on. At every university were students who you would say were eternal students. They never had quite the courage, let's say, to finish up. So they went on and on taking courses and more courses. There was no guidance. For instance, when I chose the topic for my dissertation--

RIKALA: Yes. How did you decide on it?



HELD: Well, I talked to a professor in Vienna. I was at that time in Vienna. I went to the curator of the museum who worked in the area that interested me, Flemish art of the sixteenth century.

RIKALA: And how did you decide on that?

HELD: To go to him?

RIKALA: No, on Flemish art.

HELD: When I was at the beginning of my studies-- I'd been to Holland, and that was almost accidental, because during the inflation period-- We go back now in the twenties, early twenties, when I really began to study. My mother had to go to Baden-Baden for health reasons. At that time, it was 1922, 1923, when the German inflation was at its height. With foreign money, you could buy anything. I mean, half of Germany could be bought with a few thousand dollars or guilders or whatever--pounds. Well, at that time, some Dutch distant relatives of my mother's were also in Baden-Baden. I met them there, and they invited me to come to Holland to visit them. They had Dutch guilders, you know, and the Dutch guilder was of course a stable currency. You could get hundreds of thousands--millions--of German marks for a handful of Dutch guilders. So they lived in grand style at one of the elegant hotels. Actually, they had one daughter [Ida Rosenheimer]. It was a family, father, mother, and daughter, who was a young girl. She was only.



thirteen or fourteen. She was a wonderful pianist. That's another story.

When I then a year or so later, two years later, went to Holland, I did so also because I knew I had some relatives where I could stay for cheaper. And there came a big surprise, because they had very little money. I mean, they had lived in Baden-Baden like multi-millionaires. When I saw that they lived in a very small place and they could give me a little cubicle of a room where I could stay with them-- Later on, this young girl that I mentioned married a brilliant man [David Simons], who's still alive, but she's long dead. I visit him and his second wife every time that I go to Holland. He has become a leading economist and law professor. But anyhow, I'm drifting off. So Holland was one of my first travels.

From my term in Berlin, I had seen, of course, the Rembrandts and the Rubenses and the Dutch paintings in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. Somehow, they struck a chord and I became very fond of these things. Not so much of Rubens. I mean, at that time, Rembrandt and the Dutch landscape painters and still life painters interested me more than perhaps the Flemish. But my interest in Rubens was in part stimulated by one of my Berlin professors. His name was Oskar Fischel. He gave a course--it was a lecture course--in the museum. There were usually as many as fifty



students. You registered for that course, and then he took you from one room to the other and usually talked about the background and the works of art. He was the one who gave a really memorable lecture in the Rubens room. Rubens and van Dyck. Many of those pictures that hung in that room were destroyed. You know, there was a fire in the tower--it's called the Flak Tower--where they had stored some of the largest paintings. The Rubenses are always--or many of them are--very large. They had stored them there in that Flak Tower. At the end of the war a fire broke out, and all the paintings that were stored in that tower were destroyed. Just those paintings that I remember he talked about so eloquently are no longer there. Since I liked the man so much-- He was quite a wonderful teacher, a fine scholar. That he could wax so eloquent about Rubens, I thought there must be something to it. [laughter]

RIKALA: So there was somewhat of a tradition already in looking at Dutch art and Flemish art. A strong tradition in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch art already?

HELD: In Berlin?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Oh, yes. Well, the two chief figures in the Berlin museums in the end-- Wilhelm von Bode was the Generaldirektor, the general director of the Berlin museums, and he was a specialist on Dutch painting. Then the



director of the Kupferstichkabinett, or the print room, in Berlin was Max J. Friedländer, who was a great specialist on early Netherlandish art. And one of my professors at university, Hans Kauffmann, was a specialist on Rembrandt, or gave a course on Rembrandt. So you see, the Dutch and Flemish was in Berlin.

Perhaps not so in [University of] Vienna. In Vienna, the emphasis was more on Italian painting. But even there I took a seminar with [Julius] von Schlosser on Rembrandt. Von Schlosser was the Ordinarius of Vienna University. Julius von Schlosser, who wrote a very important book on the history, you might say, of art history. Die Kunsliteratur: [Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte]--The Literature on Art--is the title, but it's called The History of Art History. He gave us a seminar on Rembrandt with the help of a man-- Ludwig Münz was the man. He was not a professor, but he was a Privatgelehrter, a private man. And he was just writing-- No, it wasn't finished yet, but he was just writing a book on Rembrandt's etchings, which exists in two volumes [Rembrandt's Etchings: Reproductions of the Whole Original Etched Work]. He, together with von Schlosser, gave a seminar on Rembrandt. There was just a small group. We were perhaps seven, eight students around the table. Seminars usually were in small groups, anyhow.

RIKALA: What kinds of questions did they pose to the



students? How did the interaction--?

HELD: Iconography was not really very much taught. This is one thing that I drifted into more later on when I even came to this country. The stylistic distinctions. The development of Rembrandt. The originality of certain prints, you know: Are they really Rembrandts or are they by one of his followers? And how did he develop, and what is the difference between the states of etchings? The etchings exist in many states, and how can you distinguish that? Very technical questions, and many of them concerned with problems of style and not of subject matter. You see, the problem of subject matter and iconography, in a broader sense, did not enter very much.

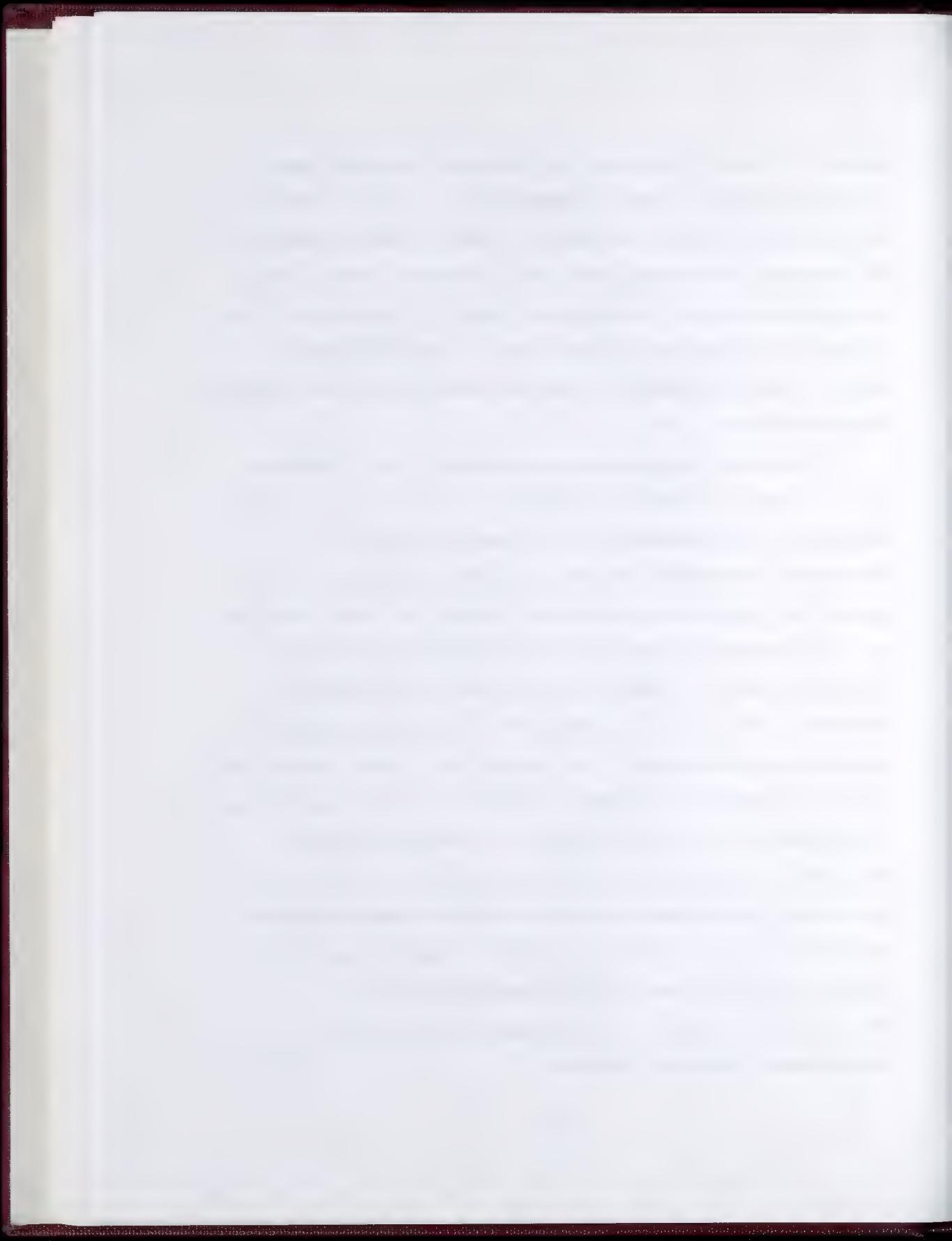
I remember that I took a seminar with Hans Kauffmann in Berlin on Rembrandt's drawings. He had slides of hundreds of drawings which were shown on the screen, a large screen, and that was really a fairly large group of students. We would talk from the floor, or he would call on you. He had two drawings projected on the screen, and then he would say, "Oh, Mr. Held, would you express yourself on the contrast between these two drawings?" Then you had to talk. You tried, of course, to make pertinent observations, but there was never a question "How does that relate to the biblical text on which it is based?" That's a question which today would come to my mind. At that time you would say, "The



pattern of line is different in this one from that one." This kind of thing. But I learned a lot. I mean, this is one thing that I will perhaps say, that we were trained to use our eyes better than most of our students here. The formal distinctions. Analysis of form. I think maybe I see it more so in retrospect, but I have a feeling we had to learn to make pertinent studies and observations and express ourselves clearly about it.

In the very beginning of my studies, I had a seminar--well, I didn't; I never participated, but I sat in on the seminar--with a professor by the name of [Edmund] Hildebrandt in Berlin. He was not famous as a scholar, but he was very popular with students because he taught them to see. He compared always Italian sculptures and paintings with each other. I mean, let's say Verrocchio against Donatello. How can you express the difference between one sculpture and the other? Or if you, let's say, look at the Luca della Robbia piece and an imitation, a follower of Luca della Robbia, can you distinguish the master from the follower? This is the kind of training that I felt I got in university, which enabled me later also to make pertinent observations when it was more serious, when it was not a school thing, but when I had to make decisions.

RIKALA: You mentioned that you spoke to the curator in Vienna about studying Flemish--



HELD: I went to him. His name was Ludwig von Baldass. I didn't know him. I just wrote to him and said, "I would like very much to talk to you." He had written a book on early Flemish painting. I came to him, and he was rather pleased that I would come to him. He said, "Why don't you study the influence of Dürer on Netherlandish art?" And that's what I wrote my dissertation on. Well, the next thing was that I had to write to Jantzen, with whom I wanted to do my dissertation. I had to write to him, "What do you think about that? Baldass tells me that this might be a good topic." Jantzen approved. So I had approval from Jantzen that he would accept it if it was acceptable. The topic seemed to him all right. And then for years--

I worked a long time on this dissertation. I promised myself I would never write a book in my life. I was so sick and tired from the effort of writing a dissertation, I thought I'd never do that again. I had not much contact with Baldass--he gave me the topic. But I still remember that there came a moment-- I was in Vienna, still writing my dissertation. I went several times to Vienna. I like the town very much. There came a moment when I was somehow stuck. I asked then the professor at the university, with whom I had become better acquainted-- Baldass I didn't see very much of. I asked him [the other professor] whether I could talk to him. We had a wonderful session one evening



in a coffee house in Vienna. His name was Swoboda, Karl Maria Swoboda. We sat, and I told him what I had done and that I don't know how to proceed. He gave me a suggestion which really was like the-- What do you call that? "The stone of wisdom," the Germans say, Stein der Weisen, or something. It really opened up a whole manner of approach which made everything fall into place. From then on, it was just all downhill. Then I wrote it, and it was accepted by the faculty. You turn it in. First your dissertation father has to read it, and then it has to be submitted to the faculty. The faculty has to approve it then and decide what grade you get. Then you have to pass your oral exams, and then it's the final grade. That's all then.

RIKALA: How did you define the problem for your dissertation? How did you go about constructing a problem?

HELD: Well, I had to, first of all, become really thoroughly acquainted with Dürer. The influence of Dürer on Netherlandish art presupposes that you really know Dürer. I have a piece that I might get to on Wednesday night--and if not I can show it to you in private--that shows you that even today I still remember Dürer. I mean, you might almost say I learned him by heart. I really looked at this again and again. Then I looked at Flemish and Dutch works of art, prints, drawings, and paintings of the period, of his time. It was really silly to limit myself to the artists of his



time. That's the title of the dissertation: Dürers Wirkung auf die Niederländische Kunst seiner Zeit. "Of his time." Because he had a very strong influence at the end of the sixteenth century on Dutch artists like Goltzius, which I didn't go into in my dissertation.

Well, what really helped me was when Swoboda asked me about whether I found any difference between the Dutch and the Flemish. You know, there were artists in Holland-- And I suddenly realized it was all in my mind but I'd never really thought about it as possible that they could be different, that the northern Netherlands could be different from the southern Netherlands. And that's what really then gave me the skeleton of my dissertation. The writing of the dissertation was then organized according to the two countries. There's a real difference. At least in my dissertation I thought so. The real influence was stronger in the northern provinces. In the Flemish regions, they imitated more individual figures. They'd pick figures from Dürer paintings and use them in various pieces. But they weren't influenced by his style, as it were. I don't know if that's really valid, but anyhow-- [laughter]

I got my degree summa cum laude in Freiburg, which was quite unexpected. I was really worried. Which was very nice in the end that it turned out to be. In the meantime, others may have graduated with the highest grade, [but]



there were only two earlier ones. [Erwin] Panofsky had graduated in Freiburg summa cum laude. Then the next one was Bauch, Kurt Bauch, who was by that time himself a professor in Freiburg. So I was the third.

RIKALA: You were in good company.

HELD: I still think it's a descending order. [laughter] It was in good company at least, yes. I was surprised, because there were, of course, several students whom I knew from the studies who were several semesters older. You remember, in my second semester, when I was only nineteen or so, I came to Freiburg. There were, of course, other students there. Some of them I saw later again at the end. No, I didn't see any of the earlier ones anymore, because they had graduated by that time, but when I came to Freiburg at the end of my studies, there were quite a number of people who were ahead of me. And when I saw that those who seemed to know so much had not reached the same level, I thought maybe something is--

RIKALA: Special.

HELD: So I was rather pleased. See, when I graduated in 1930-- Should we go into this?

RIKALA: Yes, I'd be--

HELD: I graduated in 1930, and I didn't know really what to do.

RIKALA: Did you expect to become a professional art



historian? Was that a realistic, reasonable expectation?

HELD: No. No. I had always hoped that I might be able to go into a museum. That was my ideal. But I had no immediate plans when I heard through Bauch, through Kurt Bauch, who was then in Freiburg, that a man in Berlin who was a Hungarian and had some private means, not much, was writing a book on mannerism, Italian mannerism. His name was [Frederick] Antal. That he was looking for an assistant to help him. And to help him, as it turns out, with German. Because he was a Hungarian. He wrote a book in German and he knew German quite well, but he had trouble really finding the right word sometimes. He needed someone who would help him write the thing, give him new adjectives or something. So he would hire someone, and he had asked Bauch. Bauch told him that Held might be willing, and I did. So I went to Berlin and for several months worked with that man. Then I heard that maybe I could get a voluntary trainee's job in the Berlin museums [Staatliche Museen]. So I applied, and I got it. You see, in '30, I got my degree. There was a time interval. Anyhow, in '31 I began to work at the museums. This was really the aim that I had.

RIKALA: How did you support yourself?

HELD: My sister sent me 200 marks, I think. I got a little money from that Hungarian, you know. He paid of course for my services. I remember that I identified a painting that a



private man whom I'd met owned, and he told me, "Can you do a little research on it?" I did some research, and he gave me 200 marks. You know, that kind of thing.

RIKALA: A little bit of money.

HELD: The sort of thing that repeated itself when I came to this country. Of course, I had inherited in a way part of the business, so I had even a right on some-- Although I didn't work there. But it was justified that she [Held's sister] would support me as long as I could make my own thing. I worked then for two years in Berlin with a very modest stipend from my family. I think it was just about 200 marks each month. I just slithered by.

RIKALA: What were your responsibilities, then, in the museum?

HELD: Well, you signed up for two years. The two years were divided into three sections, eight months each. Three times eight is twenty-four.

RIKALA: So it was like an internship.

HELD: Internship. Exactly. It was an internship. You can choose the sections of the museum where you want to do your work. I chose, as a first, the library. The first eight months in the library under Friedrich Winkler. The second session in the Kupferstichkabinett, whose director at that time was no longer Friedländer but Bock, Elfried Bock.

Jakob Rosenberg was also at that time at the



Kupferstichkabinett. The third section was the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, and there the director at that time was Max J. Friedländer. In those three sections of the museum, I learned a lot, but also made some observations which in one way or the other were very important for my later career. For instance, while I was in the library, I was charged with inventorizing auction catalogs and things like that that had accumulated. When I went through some of these old auction catalogs, some of the late nineteenth century, they had all the photographs in them. Mounted photographs of pictures. In one catalog--published around 1880, I don't remember the exact year--there were two photographs of pictures which fascinated me, and I began studying these photographs. I made a discovery which I then wrote up in my first major art historical article, which was published in the Preussische Jahrbuch. "Two Views of Paris." You have my bibliography here?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Where is that? The article was called "Two Views of Paris with the Master of Saint Giles." Of course in German that's "Zwei Ansichten von Paris beim Meister des Heiligen Aegidius." [Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen 53 (1932): 3-15]. Well, the paintings that were photographed had disappeared. I did all my research on the basis of these two photographs. I didn't know where the paintings



were. I published this. It was, I think, a relatively important article. It was worth it to be published in the Preussische Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, which was what the Art Bulletin is here. It was really one of the chief distinguished publications. If you had an article in the Preussische Jahrbuch, it was really an honor, and I was very proud to get in. Those two paintings were later discovered by [Georges] Wildenstein, and they're hanging in the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington. They are now here. But when I published them, they were still lost.

Well, let me go back to it. In the print room, when I was an intern at the Kupferstichkabinett, I had to organize the photo collection. They had a large photo collection. I chose particularly the photo collection of Flemish and Dutch paintings, especially since I was of course relatively familiar with the material through my dissertation. I expanded of course my memory--the memory images--through looking at more and more of these things. I used the time also to go through the drawing collection of the print room. I had the complete freedom to take out boxes and go through them.

RIKALA: And they had a good drawing collection?

HELD: Oh, enormous. Great collection. Yes. Yes. Well, I can show you something in a few minutes when we make a break. One of the curators there now in the print room is a



young scholar whom I know quite well. He just sent me a catalog of an exhibition which he had organized of fifty Dürer drawings in Berlin. And that's not even all. They have more. But he made a collection of fifty drawings. Now, when you look through it, the treasures, fifty Dürer drawings-- They would be proud out there at the [J. Paul] Getty [Museum] if they had one or two or three. I don't know. They may have one.

RIKALA: I don't know.

HELD: I don't know. But I was, of course, permitted as an intern to go to the boxes and take them out and look at them.

RIKALA: And spend time with them.

HELD: These two years in Berlin were enormously helpful to me to enlarge my knowledge of mainly, of course, Netherlandish art.

RIKALA: But also to focus your interest in a practical sense.

HELD: Then I went to Friedländer, to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. I don't know what was really assigned to me--it's very funny that I don't even remember precisely what I did-- but I was called in every once in a while to give an opinion on pictures which were brought in from the outside.

Friedländer sort of wanted to give us a chance to get our teeth into the connoisseurship, you know. My training at



the time was what you might call training in connoisseurship, relying, again, primarily on stylistic observations. The whole range of Warburgian iconography and so on, all this was still outside my interest. I came back to that, as I said, at a later date.



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

JUNE 24, 1991

RIKALA: I was wondering if you would describe Berlin as a city, Berlin society, before Hitler. And then the relationship in some way of the museum to society.

HELD: Maybe I should link both of them together, Berlin and Vienna, because I commuted, some terms in Berlin and some in Vienna. We're talking about the second half of the 1920s. You may recall that I said my mother [Nannette Seligmann Held] died in 1926, and from 1926 to the fall of 1927, I was in my hometown. But before that and then again after that, I was--both several times--either in Berlin or in Vienna. Needless to say, in both cities the museums were my primary concern, and I spent as much time as I could in each case in the museums. In Vienna in the so-called [Graphische Sammlung] Albertina, which is the collection of prints and drawings. Both cities had, of course, a very intense and vital cultural life. In the 1920s, Berlin was a place where the theater was outstanding. In Vienna, it was the music, especially the opera. When I was in Vienna, I usually went as often as I could to the opera. It was very cheap because as a young man I didn't mind standing through the opera, so I took standing in the uppermost level of the opera house. Quite often you could find a seat--took a ticket for standing room only, and then if there was a seat you



sometimes sat down, or you sat on steps. I heard some wonderful opera performances, and I remember a few of them. I heard, of course, my first Rosenkavalier in Vienna with a cast that couldn't be better. Do you know the Rosenkavalier?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Do you have an interest in music?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Well, the Rosenkavalier, you know, has one sort of comic character, sometimes a little sinister too. The Ochs von Lerchenau, the man who wants to marry that young lady and get her money. And that was sung by a basso--Richard Mayr was his name--who if not the first one to sing that role certainly had made that role his own. At that time there was only one Ochs von Lerchenau--that was this man Mayr. And as the Marschallin, I saw Lotte Lehmann. She was, again, quite wonderful. Some of these singers that I remember from those times, they had such respect for the language. You know, singers, quite often they may hit on the right tones, and the expressiveness of the melody may be there, but they quite often are very mushy when it comes to real enunciation of the words. That is the greatness of some of these singers that you would hear. Lotte Lehmann I saw in Berlin also in an opera in The Ring of the Nibelung by Wagner, and she sang-- Now, what was it? The Rheingold



is the first, and then the next one-- Can't think of the name. [Siegfried] Anyhow, she sang a role called Sieglinde, and that was really unforgettable. Then there were other singers that I remember. Olszevska was one mezzo-soprano who sang Mozart. Of course, in Vienna you can hear Mozart also. In Berlin there were other-- For instance, I remember a very interesting, very fascinating performance of Gilbert and Sullivan in German. The Mikado. Do you know The Mikado?

RIKALA: I think so. Yes. Oh, yes, I know which one it is.

HELD: It's one of the Gilbert and Sullivans. It was of course in German. The main role was sung--well, he couldn't really sing, he sort of made Sprechgesang--by [Max] Pallenberg, a comedian, a wonderful actor. Pallenberg. Well, I saw all the great actors. You see, in Berlin you veered to the stage and in Austria to the opera. I saw Der Hauptmann von Köpenick. It's a play by Carl Zuckmayer. Now, you may not know the name. He was a German playwright who was very successful just exactly in the 1920s. And The Captain of Köpenick was made into a play here, translated; I think they made a movie. Maybe it was a German movie, I don't remember. But I saw the man-- Werner Krauss was the actor in that. Well, there were several actors who-- I mean, Krauss was one, Werner Krauss. Klöpfer was another one. I don't remember his first name. [Eugen] And



Jannings, Emil Jannings, of whom, by the way, I own a drawing done by an artist, a portrait of Emil Jannings.

RIKALA: Oh, that's interesting.

HELD: And you may even know Emil Jannings, although at first the name may mean nothing. Have you ever seen a movie Der blaue Engel?

RIKALA: Der blaue Engel.

HELD: The Blue Angel. It's Marlene Dietrich.

RIKALA: Oh.

HELD: You know her by name, surely.

RIKALA: Yes. Yes.

HELD: She played the female role, and Emil Jannings played the male role opposite Marlene Dietrich. So I saw of course then-- I saw the dean of all the German actors, [Albert] Bassermann. Bassermann. And it goes on and on and on. The stage was something unbelievably fascinating. There's one name, Wegener, Paul Wegener. I mean, if you write down these names-- There was still another artist, [Konrad] Veidt. Now, if you get down Werner Krauss, Klöpfer, Veidt, Bassermann, and Wegener, all this, it's a roster of absolutely top-notch stars from the stage. I even saw one actor who was very fascinating to watch, who later became the chief theatrical manager under Hitler. Some of these actors left, but some of them stayed. Veidt was, I think, Jewish. None of the others were Jewish, and they didn't



have to leave.

But Bassermann-- I called him the dean of all this. He was an old man, very much venerated. He was the holder of the Iffland ring. Maybe I'll explain that to you also.

[August Wilhelm] Iffland was a very famous German actor of the period of Goethe and Schiller, 150 years ago, 200 years before. He was at that time the great actor in Germany. I think it's early nineteenth century that Iffland lived. His ring would always be given to the next chief of the German theatrical craft. I don't know how many hands it had gone through, but it finally came to Bassermann. He was the wearer of the Iffland ring. Then he left. In the Hitler period he left Germany because his wife was Jewish. And so he left. What happened to the Iffland ring I don't know. There were all sorts of stories at that time that he had destroyed it. There was no one should get it after him, because he had-- I don't know if that's true. Maybe he did give it to somebody. But one man who was among the prominent actors, he made his peace with Hitler and became sort of the chief theatrical genius. He was a wonderful actor, but then he was not a very nice man.

So this was Berlin. Of course there were also actresses. There was Käthe Dorsch. There was Elisabeth Bergner, who came here to this country. You must also remember that that was the time when the Dreigroschenoper



was first performed--The Three Penny Opera. Do you know the Dreigroschenoper? Have you heard about that?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Among the students, everyone sang the tunes of the Dreigroschenoper. It was a great success because it reflected so much the somewhat ironic and bitter feeling of the people, because we saw the rising of the extremes, the rightist extreme.

There were some very interesting periodicals. There was one called Die Weltbühne, which was very critical, of course, of the political situation at the time. And some of the people who wrote for the Weltbühne were later victims of Hitler. [Carl von] Ossietzky was one of the people who wrote for-- Of course Brecht, the playwright, wrote for this. There was one other man who wrote in Die Weltbühne. Who was the man who fled to Norway? The name may come to me.

There was a great deal of intellectual life. Most of the time, most of the life was really antigovernment. Even as long as the leftist coalition reigned in Germany-- I mentioned before--the general trend was reactionary. The socialists never really put through--were not capable if they really wanted to put through--a really kind of socialist government. They made too many compromises, and gradually the reins drifted into other hands. You know, of



course, they lost people by assassination.

RIKALA: But when did there start being Nazi pressure in these cultural institutions? I mean, when was first evidence of that, from assassinations or--?

HELD: It's hard to pin down when it was first. But in the late twenties-- You know, I lived in Berlin as a student, then two complete years before I left my position as an intern. And of course during those years, that was already a time when the storm troopers paraded through the streets, in the early thirties. You see, I left in January 1934, so all the violence that came later I did not experience firsthand. But I still saw this. I still heard them sing, "If Jewish blood splatters from your knife, then we feel really good." That's a song that they sang.

RIKALA: Oh, my God.

HELD: Yeah. It's unbelievable. People can't believe that this really could happen in what was supposed to be a civilized country. But, you see, that whole bloom or splendid period of theatrical and musical achievement that you had in the twenties and still to some extent in the very early thirties, that atrophied and disappeared then very quickly, and then it was finished. To be in Berlin in those years was, of course, enormously stimulating, even though I couldn't participate too much because I had not much money. I was a student, and I had to live within my very strict



financial limits. So I could go past it to see a play if there were some standing places available. That Mikado thing I wanted to-- I mean, if you want to hear the individual recollection that I had--

RIKALA: Yes. Yes, please.

HELD: It was made up like--as we today would call it--a musical, with lots of dancers and so on. And it was in the largest theater in Berlin, the Grosses Schauspielhaus. It was a building done by one of the leading architects. The architect's name was Hans Poelzig. It was very fantastic. It looked a little like a cave or something, with [stalactites] and I don't know what. That theater held surely two thousand people or so. Not intimate by any means. So it was really like a big musical with dance numbers and what are called acrobatic acts. They had one act where the sailors were dancing or singing or something, and then they had a pole--and it must have been held--and one sailor climbed up on the pole, you know, and was supposed to do something at the top. And whatever he did, he fell down from about four meters or so height. He fell down on the stage. They picked him up and took him right out, you know. No one knew what happened. But somehow the spirit had gone out of the play.

RIKALA: Sure.

HELD: I mean, everyone-- I mean, I certainly, and surely



others too, were sitting there and couldn't-- You didn't have your heart in watching some funny business going on when you thought what happened to that poor boy. Then in the intermission or the beginning of the second act or something-- What was his name? I mentioned the name before--Pallenberg. He was the star of that show.

Pallenberg came out and with that sailor--

RIKALA: Oh, good.

HELD: He bowed down for him and sort of gave his--what should I say?--his accolade to life, very high-spirited.

RIKALA: Yeah. That he was fine after all. Yeah.

HELD: It was very nice. What else? And, of course, concerts went on too. Concerts were usually more expensive. Theater and opera I can remember more than concerts. I'm quite sure I did go occasionally to concerts. But I didn't play an instrument, and none of my friends were too much interested, so I don't recall so much, although I must have.

I knew an alto, a very fine alto. She sang--privately-- and whenever she sang I went. I once was in Dresden for a visit, and I must have known that she was coming. Anyhow, I called up her hotel. She said, "Oh, it's very nice." I mean, she was very pleased. She gave me, of course, a ticket, and she said, "Now, you applaud." Which I would have done anyhow. [laughter] But she didn't need it. She was a wonderful singer. But I remember that she said, "Now,



I'm glad you're here. Will you accompany me to--?" Do you know something, she probably wanted to eat. She was alone, you know. I mean, there may have been a manager around her, but she was alone. And so she said, "Now you are my companion." For dinner. She didn't want to go alone in the restaurant. At that time I was perhaps twenty-five or so. She was quite a few years older. I hope there are records. She must have made records.

RIKALA: What about the relationship of the museums, then, with contemporary artists or that aspect of contemporary life?

HELD: Well, you hit a relatively sore point. I think I should have perhaps, as some other people did, had more contact with living artists. But I didn't. I guess one can figure all kinds of reasons why not. I saw their works, but I had no personal contact. Of course, there was a museum for modern art, the so-called Kronprinzenpalais. The Kronprinzenpalais unter den Linden. The Crown Prince's Palace. Kronprinzenpalais unter den Linden. They had contemporary art, and they had also a very good modern art museum. I saw all the expressionist painters there, you know. But the idea of trying to take up a contact with any of them somehow never occurred to me. Maybe I was too shy, you know. So of course I watched the contemporary scene. There were clever talks among students, talks going on. I



mean, surely we talked, and I can remember a few cases where we talked about contemporary art. In New York, for instance, Meyer Schapiro, a friend of mine, he always was very much interested in meeting the artists personally. Somehow in Germany that was-- I never had even one suggesting doing that. I didn't have any contact.

I did buy already in those years a few things that I still have. When I came to this country, I had about six or seven [Max] Beckmann etchings. I still have three very fine Beckmann etchings. And I have the whole set of Bach Kantate--I have that set. That's eleven lithographs. Many years later when I was in New York, I met an American artist, a graphic artist, whose work I liked. [Werner] Drewes is his name. He has not become famous, but he was a very respected artist and I think he did good work. That was in the early 1930s when I came to this country, '34, '35, or so. At that time, no one really knew the name of Beckmann here. I showed him some of these prints and I said I would like to have some of his, and he said, "All right. I'll trade you some of mine against Beckmann." Whatever I had, I traded my Beckmann etchings for these Drewes etchings. Now, it was not a very good trade, but that's what it was. [laughter]

RIKALA: Sincere, nonetheless.

HELD: But I kept three Beckmann etchings, and I still have



them. I can show you them. Those I will find easily. Beckmann, by the way, interested me from the beginning, because when I was still a student in Freiburg, there was a Beckmann exhibition in Mannheim, in the Kunsthalle in Mannheim. I saw that exhibition, and if I had had money, I would have bought a painting of his. I thought it was so great. But it was totally beyond my reach. Even though, of course, compared to what they fetch today, it would have been a little.

There I had some contact with the director of the Kunsthalle in Mannheim [G. F. Hartlaub] for another reason, because he organized an exhibition. That must have been in 1928, when I-- Nineteen twenty-eight was a jubilee for the four hundredth anniversary of Dürer's death. He died in 1528, and this was in 1928. And he organized an exhibition, Dürer and Posterity. Somehow he heard that I was writing a dissertation on Dürer's influence in the Netherlands. So he asked me would I come and show him my material. You see, I hadn't even my doctorate yet, but I had already worked on the dissertation for some time. So he borrowed some of my material, and a whole chapter of that catalog is about what I did. That was my first breaking into art historical print, 1928, the Dürer jubilee.

My first piece, my first printed piece, goes back still further. When I was still in school in Mosbach, we had two newspapers in Mosbach. One was Protestant, the other was



Catholic. I wrote a paper which is entitled "Auf ein totes Kätzchen," "On a Little Dead Cat." We had a cat, a young cat. You know how wonderful young cats can be--

RIKALA: Yes. They're so lively.

HELD: They love to play with their own tail and run around suddenly. Anyhow, I wrote a piece and I sent it in, and the Catholic newspaper printed it. That was my first print.

"On a Dead Little Cat." It's not listed in my bibliography.

RIKALA: No, it's not, is it? [laughter] I wanted to ask a little bit about your friendship with Max Friedländer at the museum. If we could talk a little bit about the personalities--

HELD: I have written a piece about Friedländer. Have you--?

RIKALA: No, I haven't looked at that.

HELD: I have that here. Well, that's quite a long thing. Not only about my relationship to Friedländer, but on Friedländer in general. And you might be interested in that.

RIKALA: Yes, I would be interested. We can talk about that again.

HELD: I worked with Friedländer for eight months, or on the same floor, not with him. However, I did work with him after I had been kicked out of the [Kaiser Friedrich] Museum in April 1933. Then I stayed in Berlin in order to learn the trade. That you don't know yet. I knew I had to leave



Germany. My career in Germany was finished. That was obvious to me. I did not expect that any other country would be interested in a German art historian who only had a Ph.D. but nothing else to show. And so, like many others in my position, I felt I ought to learn a trade. What was the next best thing-- Since I had painted and drawn for some time, I thought I'd learn restoration. I stayed in Berlin from April until December in '33.

During that same period, I remained in contact with Friedländer. I mean, I'd worked next to him for eight months, and so we had a very nice personal relationship. He said if I wanted to, I could-- Again, on a voluntary basis. There was no money in it. I could help him with the eleventh volume of Die altniederländische Malerei. If you take volume eleven, which was then published a year later, you will see that there's a footnote in which he thanks a lady, Grete Ring, and me for helping him with that volume. In fact I did more-- Of course he didn't specify that, and there was no need for that. But I helped him in a few cases where I provided some information that he didn't have about-- Well, about some pictures and about pictures that he simply had not known. I swayed him in a few cases even in attribution.

So I sat in his private-- Of course, I had no more place to go at the museum. He could stay for another few



years, but then he himself also had to leave. But I went to his home, usually in the afternoon, and then worked with the proofs. He had the galley proofs ready, and I worked with the proofs. Proofreading, you know, that kind of thing, and making corrections. He usually rested on the couch and read the newspaper. [laughter] We didn't work together. But I was very happy, because it was always stimulating to be with him. Many people found him aloof. I always found him-- Well, not very outgoing, and a certain distance was always there, but I was young and I respected him and I took it as a natural relationship. And of course he helped me, then, with letters of recommendation when I came to this country.



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JUNE 24, 1991

HELD: --on Rembrandt etchings in Vienna. I also had a course on baroque art in Berlin--a seminar with Werner Weisbach. In that seminar, I wrote a paper and read a paper on Caravaggio's paintings for San Luigi de' Francesi in Rome. What I remember now is that in that paper, I asked the question, or came to give the answer also to the question, "Where is the setting exactly--? How do we have to explain the setting in that scene where Christ is calling Matthew?" You know, he comes in from the right, and Matthew and his companions are sitting around a table to the left. There's a curious shadow falling across a window. I came to a conclusion in that paper that it was a courtyard scene. I mean that we see the wall of the house but we are not inside a house. We are outside, and there must be the gate into that courtyard at the right, and Christ and then the companion come in through that gate. I don't know what the general opinion now is, but, anyhow, I tried to my own satisfaction to work it out.

I think I mentioned before that I took my first seminar in which I read a paper with [Hans] Jantzen on medieval architecture, and that I wrote a paper on the tower of the minster in Freiburg. Now, that, again, I didn't [inaudible], but I was very much interested in the problem



of transition, because the lower level of the building is a much earlier style, much more emphasizing the wall and not the open air, the spaces that open up. The architect must have made a definite plan to hide the transition from the heavier style--almost late Romanesque or early Gothic--to high Gothic, with the upper part of the tower that is wonderful. It's really maybe the most beautiful Gothic tower built in Europe. And today it's still like-- Have you a visual image of the tower? It's all airy. Filigree is not the right word, because it is solid also. Some other towers are too decorative and too much detail. This one has an ornamental quality, and yet it is so simple in the concept that it is really extremely beautiful.

Well, in Vienna I became acquainted, really, with Italian art, which is quite natural in Vienna. The people tend towards Italy. For the first time I learned something about Italian trecento painting, in a course in Vienna. So I became familiar there for the first time, because in Germany, in Freiburg, no one-- I mean, everything was so directed either towards the Gothic architecture and sculpture--

Oh, yes, I forgot that I took a course on Gothic sculpture with Jantzen also. I think I learned a great deal in that course, so that later on I could very quickly and fairly correctly put a date on Gothic sculpture. You



remember that I said we learned chronology, the development of style, and so that was really the essential thing that we studied. You can really, to a certain degree, without knowing anything about the documentation and so on, determine the date of sculptures. What is 1230, what is 1260, you see, and so on. Also later. Again, early fourteenth century. And so thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sculpture in Germany, I really learned well in those courses. I always liked it very much.

Even last year, when I traveled in Germany with my son [James Michael Held]-- I have a young friend, the daughter of a person who lives in Bamberg. We stopped there and stayed overnight with him. He's a musician playing with the Bamberg orchestra. But I went there to show my son the Bamberg cathedral and the Bamberg sculpture. Then when we drove on to East Germany, or what was originally East Germany--last year it was already united--on the way I went to Leipzig, and he went on his own to Berlin. We had rented a car. On the way back I said, "We must stop in Naumburg." You know Naumburg? Well, you see Bamberg is first half of the thirteenth century sculpture, and Naumburg is just somewhat later. But both of them are high points of thirteenth-century sculpture. Now, when I'm in the area, I always go also to Naumburg because it's-- I would suggest if



you ever have a chance, go to any of these places.

What I have not mentioned is that, especially in Berlin, it was a tradition that the student enrolled in the department of art history would make trips with the department under the guidance of one of the professors. I made several such trips from Berlin. I think that is something that is perhaps important to mention, that this was part of the education. We did it even in Freiburg. That was perhaps the first trip together under the guidance of a professor that I took that was to northern Italy, from Freiburg. With Jantzen as the guide, or as the conductor of the tour, so to speak. We traveled all along the Via Emilia in northern Italy. We started with Milano, then Pavia, then--I don't know the sequence--Piacenza, Parma, Modena. We ended, anyhow, in Ravenna. That was the last thing. We traveled by train. We did this all by train, and we stayed overnight in cheap lodgings where a student could stay. The women were put into convents. Convents were willing to accept these women. But I remember that they told us one morning-- We met for breakfast, you know. They were outraged because they said-- They were given a room where there was a washstand or something, and they wanted to wash. So they took their clothes off to wash. The nuns, apparently, could see that, and they came rushing in with blankets to cover them and said, "How indecent you are, you



know, to--" So they were shocked that they couldn't even wash themselves properly.

RIKALA: Were there many women students in your--?

HELD: Oh, I would say it was always about half and half. So that was the first major trip, which must have lasted, I think, about two weeks. Bologna I forgot. It was Bologna also, and then Ravenna. I was astonished, but maybe it was a time element-- We didn't go to Ferrara and Padua. That we didn't see. Later, of course, I was in Ferrara and Padua on my own. Well, anyhow, in Ravenna I had the dubious pleasure of seeing Mussolini alive.

RIKALA: Oh, my goodness. Just by chance.

HELD: Because he came-- This was now-- If I remember correctly, it must have been around 1924 or 1925. Something like this, '24. Well, he had scheduled a trip for reasons of state or whatever, and he had a big cortege. He came in the car, standing in the car and greeting the accumulated people. We were among them too, you know. Well, I didn't shake hands with him. I just saw him drive by. But we were more interested in the mosaics of the churches in Ravenna, which are also beautiful. I learned a lot on that trip, really. The aim of that trip was to study Romanesque churches in northern Italy and Romanesque sculpture and Renaissance. All these places, Parma and Modena and so on, are full of fascinating buildings and sculptures.



RIKALA: Was the focus of the art history education still primarily in medieval art, or were there people who were doing--? And was there an awareness of [Heinrich] Wölfflin doing this kind of comparison of the north and south?

HELD: Well, since we were interested in style and that is of course also Wölfflin-- Sure. We didn't necessarily apply the categories that Wölfflin had developed, because they were categories with which he thought he could distinguish Renaissance from baroque. I mean, as you probably know, this has been questioned, because he called anything baroque that was postclassical. Anything after Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio perhaps was already baroque.

Tintoretto was already baroque for him. The whole concept of mannerism didn't exist and entire groups of artists, like Rosso and Pontormo and Parmigianino, Wölfflin never even recognized. They weren't mentioned. We did compare things, but not trying to get such big categories.

Let's see, we didn't compare the Romanesque and Gothic. We tried to look at schools and distinguish between the same schools, the master and the people who worked under the master, secondary, or the development of the master himself. Let's say in Bamberg, for instance-- It's a wonderful place to study that. There are several masters who were active, evidently, in the Bamberg cathedral. There is a master who is still late Romanesque in style. Then there is the



western influence of Gothic coming in. Then you can distinguish, within these groups, between the leading master and some assistants who just are qualitatively not as high. So these are the things we did, not trying to develop the Romanesque versus the Gothic. In Berlin I had that one course with [Edmund] Hildebrandt I mentioned this morning. That was a little along those lines. But later on I felt that was beginner's kind of art history. One has to be much more subtle and much more penetrating in examining the stylistic elements to come to final decisions.

We made one trip from Berlin to West and East Prussia. Those are parts of the country which today are Poland. At that time they were still Germany. We went to Königsberg and Danzig--you know these towns have different names now. We went to Marienburg--I have no idea what it's called now-- which was a foundation of one of the orders, religious orders, the Deutsche Ritter [Teutonic Knights]. The architecture which they built up is mainly early Gothic, if I remember correctly. High Gothic perhaps in parts. There always was a professor with us who knew the things and with whom we could discuss. I mean, it wasn't a show by a professor who told us; we worked on these things together, you know. He said, "Well, let's look at this." Part of the training-- We tried to reconstruct the history of the building by looking for signs of change in masonry.



RIKALA: That's still a very important way of looking.

HELD: We learned that, for instance. On that trip, we paid a great deal of attention to the sequence in which a building was erected. And that, by the way, I learned also in Freiburg in the architectural course in which I gave my paper on the tower. Of course, there were other students who read other papers of other parts of problems, even of the building. When you go around the Freiburg minster today, you can still establish the phases in which the building was built. It began with a completely Romanesque transept. Then the building continued towards the west. The first bay--or the first two bays if I remember correctly--towards the west is still the very early, very heavy Gothic. Then comes a new master and suddenly a higher Gothic style. Then came the tower. Then they began building-- There was of course a Romanesque apse there. The transept was certainly not empty; there was of course an apse. But, if I remember correctly, that was torn down then and then a choir, a late Gothic choir, was built.

RIKALA: Probably extended.

HELD: The building period extended from the late twelfth century through the thirteenth and fourteenth century and even maybe some parts of the fifteenth. But then in the sixteenth century, on one side of the transept, a Renaissance portico was added, so that you really have a



Renaissance piece of architecture there. It's fascinating to be able to learn to see these things. Many people look at that building-- Tourists, they look at it and say, "Oh, beautiful," or this or that. But they are not trained to read the history of the building from the shape, from the construct, from the decorative elements, from the type of masonry employed, and so on.

Then we made a trip also from Berlin to Denmark. I remember it very vividly. A trip to Copenhagen. We visited the museums in Copenhagen. Who's that famous sculptor of the nineteenth century? I ought to know. Well, I can look it up. There's a museum dedicated to his work in Copenhagen. [Bertel Thorvaldsen] Then we went outside Copenhagen. We went to a castle-- Where was Hamlet from? Kronborg? No, Frederiksberg. Is there a Frederiksberg? Kronborg? Oh, well.

RIKALA: We'll come back to it.

HELD: Anyhow, we visited some of the castles. And Hälsingborg-- That's it, that's it. Hälsingborg, that's I think where Hamlet lived. Isn't it? We went there, Hälsingborg. We visited the castle also. The water is-- I think they call it Oresund. The other side is Sweden. And is that Helsingør? On the Danish side it's Helsingør, and the Swedish side is Hälsingborg. I think there's a place called Frederiksberg also.



So we visited all these castles, like tourists. There were also always specific problems that we tried to follow up in these things. And it was always very nice, because we were a congenial group of students. The men liked to impress the women on such trips. If I may put in a very non-art historical moment of that trip, I can tell you that, too. We went to the water edge in-- I think it must have been Hälsingborg, or anyway, one of those. Out in the water, there were big rocks. Within a certain distance, you could go from one rock to the other, but you had to be careful. I was a little bit of a show-off, I think. I wanted to show how daring I was to step over from one rock. I stepped on one of those a little further out, and it was covered with slimy plants. I slid off and I fell right into the water. So my moment of glory was short-lived because I had to go back to the hotel and get dried up. [laughter] So anyhow.

RIKALA: That's nice to hear, though.

HELD: Then the last trip that I remember we did with a seminar-- Those were seminars in connection with certain courses. One trip was into the Harz region of Germany. The Harz is a group of mountains that culminates in one mountain that has a special significance because it's called the Brocken. And the Brocken is, according to legend, the place where the witches meet at certain times of the year, I don't



know. It's full of fairy-tale connections. But there are some very beautiful towns there, in that area.

Unfortunately, many of them suffered in the war. Well, Gernrode I think is one of the towns there. Gernrode. But we traveled to most of these. That was of medieval art. Maybe some of it's still going back to Romanesque times. One of the great very early churches is in Hildesheim. Saint Michael's in Hildesheim is one of the great very early Romanesque churches. So these are the trips. That was a very good principle of some of the art historical departments in Germany, to take student groups on such trips.

RIKALA: It's a whole different approach to the discipline too, rather than only seeing slides or only seeing photographs.

HELD: The stress was of course to alert students to the importance of working from originals. That stayed with me throughout my life. Even today-- People send me photographs, but in most of the cases-- I can give a preliminary idea, but I can't really say anything unless I see the thing. It's absolutely essential to see the originals. But American students are not sufficiently trained to do that. There are exceptions surely, but by and large they study too much from photographs. But of course, the kind of problems that they work on, sociological and



economic connections and psychological things, for those questions this approach doesn't really mean very much. And there is really-- What we did some scholars here now call fetishism. Art historical fetishism. [laughter]

RIKALA: So including other disciplines--for example, economics or politics--in art history, that was done to a less degree or almost nonexistent degree?

HELD: Well, very little.

RIKALA: Very little.

HELD: Very little. I mean, what we worked hard to look for was documentary evidence. To really go to archives and see if you can get documentary evidence. I've done that much later at one point, where I went to the Antwerp archives and worked for quite some time in the archives. You see, the aim was to find out when were they done, what were the documents connected with it, who were the patrons, who were the artists, what is the date, and what are the influences that were at work. For instance, in medieval sculpture you think about the question how much it influences-- From France, from Reims, let's say, Gothic architecture from Bourges or Reims or something, and so on. This kind of thing. It was always connected to the work of art and placing it in history. The possible ramifications, the workings of political, religious, economic concerns which may have influenced the shape of the picture--which I now



realize is very important--these were not the things that we were trained really to look out for. So you might call it a very one-sided kind of education. There was not much difference in Berlin, Freiburg, or Vienna. But at that time already in Hamburg, another tradition was developing.

[Erwin] Panofsky was already teaching at that time in Hamburg. But I never did go to Hamburg, so I didn't get that.

RIKALA: But was there gossip about him, or talk about him?

HELD: Oh, I only know that one of my Berlin teachers was very unhappy that Panofsky had attacked him.

RIKALA: Who?

HELD: Hans Kauffmann. He had written a book called Albrecht Dürers Rhythmische Form. That had been reviewed very negatively by Panofsky. Kauffmann complained to me that Panofsky was too sharp on him. Since I was very close to Kauffmann, long after the war-- When was that? Maybe fifteen years ago, I saw him in Munich. He immediately said what times we had, and so on. I was very close to him. I know he never was a Nazi, but he remained there. I never heard that he had protested anything. He didn't have much courage to stand up to the regime. I don't blame anyone for not trying. Who knows what kind of courage I might have had if I had been there. [laughter] But in the earlier years when I was still a student, he had taken a liking to me, and



so we were rather close.

I can tell you a little more about that. Because one day he said, "Would you like to meet Geheimrat [Wilhelm von] Bode?" Bode was the Generaldirektor of the museum. Kauffmann knew him quite well because they were both interested in Dutch art, and so Kauffmann knew Bode quite well. He felt that since he wanted to do something for me, push my career a little, that maybe I should meet Bode. So he took me and said, "Herr Geheimrat, here's one of my students that I am interested in," and so on. So I met Bode. Without saying anything yet, Bode said, "Ah, young man, I have some paintings standing here. Now, for instance, look at this picture. What do you think about it?" Putting me right there on the spot immediately. I pondered, and I knew roughly where it would go. I said, "Well, I think it looks to me like an Italian work of the early sixteenth century." Bode said, "Correct, young man. It's dated 1501." If it had been 1499, I would have been wrong. So that was my meeting. I mean, there were a few more words, but I remember that moment when I was just on the border, I was just--

RIKALA: Just called it right.

HELD: Yeah, just called it right. And then Kauffmann did something else. He had written-- There is a Dutch periodical called Oud Holland. Do you know it?



RIKALA: I'm aware of it, yes.

HELD: He had written twice, I think, a survey of current, or recent, literature on Dutch art. Looking over the periodicals, let's say for the last two or three years, and reporting what had been done in publications, books and articles, in Dutch art. One day he said he had other things to do right now, would I be willing to take over that report for Oud Holland. Of course it was a tremendous honor to do this. I wrote then quite a long report for that ["Overzicht der litteratuur betreffende nederlandsche kunst"]. Let me see. Have you got the thing? I can give you a year when I wrote it. I mean, the year when it was published. Writing the thing is always quite earlier. That was published in Oud Holland, Vol. 50, 1933. So it was published in 1933. Oh, I did two of them, I see. I did two reviews, or maybe it's the second part. One, 1933, no. 3, pp. 133-44, and then Vol. 50, no. 4, 1933, pp. 179-92. At that time, of course, I was no longer a student--that was already after my doctorate--but I was still close to Kauffmann. You know, he had just yielded that to me. It must have been written in '32, because after '33, of course, I could no longer work there. That was the year in which I already started training for restoration and prepared myself for living abroad.

RIKALA: So the work you did learning to do restoration, was



that very much an apprenticeship situation?

HELD: Let me first-- Before we go into this-- Because that will carry us over into my emigration from Germany. So I think we can use that differently. Let me see what I can still remember. Since we talked about the period of my studies at universities, let me see if I can add something. I myself, of course, traveled. You know, when I worked on my dissertation, which was the influence of Dürer on Netherlandish art, I had to travel. I traveled, of course, to the Netherlands and to Belgium. I had to stay some time in Antwerp, a long time in Antwerp actually, and established then some rather nice contacts there. In Antwerp, I met a man who was the curator of the graphic collection of the town of Antwerp. You might call it the print collection of the town of Antwerp, which was associated or located in the Musée Plantin-Moretus, the Plantin Museum, the Musée Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp. The print room was associated, or attached to it. Well, it's the same building. The man who was the curator for the prints and drawings was a man by the name of Delen, [Adrien Jean Joseph] Delen, and he was the editor of a Belgian periodical called Onze Kounst. There's also a French edition. You see, Belgium is bilingual, both Flemish and French. That periodical appeared in two languages.

Delen, with whom I talked-- I told him what I was working on, and he was very much interested in my



dissertation. And so, since we met several times and we had a good personal relationship, he said one day, oh, he would like very much to have reports of things going on in Germany or in Austria for Onze Kounst. So I was made a reporter. I wrote, then, while I was still a student, I wrote reports. One was, I think, a report about a Dürer exhibition in Nuremberg. That must have been 1928. I think I mentioned the Dürer jubilee before. Then I wrote a report from Vienna, among others, about an exhibition of [Egon] Schiele. Schiele died in 1918. In 1928 there was an exhibition, ten years after Schiele's death, of his works. I wrote a report about the Schiele exhibition. I can't say I foretold that he would be such a great light or a great famous artist in America in our time now.

RIKALA: Was that the first piece that you wrote that was on a relatively contemporary artist?

HELD: I mentioned another Austrian painter, [Anton] Faistauer, in that same review, I believe. Well, anyhow, I realized that Schiele was a major figure, but I thought him, if I remember correctly--I haven't read it for a long time--a little one-sided. So I published--

You see, I spoke about my travels. On my own I traveled to Belgium. I had some very nice personal contacts there, but that is neither here nor there in our conversation. And I made my first trip to France. I looked



at the Flemish paintings. I worked at that time probably already in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. I had an easy stay in Paris because I stayed with a friend of mine who had been in my school in Heidelberg, this Russian refugee that I mentioned before. He had by that time settled in Paris, and I could stay with him. So that was in April. It must have been April '28 or '29. Anyhow, I never forgot that, my first visit to Paris. In April the weather was just unbelievably beautiful. One falls in love of course in Paris--with Paris rather, I should say--in the spring. So I don't remember all my trips, but anyhow I gave you an idea of how much travel one did as a student in Europe.

RIKALA: And this is a great opportunity.

HELD: A great advantage. The younger European scholars are still in Europe, and you can travel easily from Germany to France to Italy and to the Netherlands or to England. Students in America, they have to have a scholarship. They have to get a scholarship to travel to Europe, and it's more expensive and more difficult.

RIKALA: Yes, it's much more difficult. It puts a distance in your imagination of the arts when you have to learn that way.

HELD: I traveled in Germany to Munich and to Dresden,



always to the great collections. Munich was very important. Although I never studied there for my dissertation, I looked at, of course, the works there.



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JUNE 25, 1991

HELD: I told you that I worked for Friedländer. Didn't I mention that?

RIKALA: Yes. Max Friedländer.

HELD: On the early niederländisch painting. Well, when I was still working in the museum under Friedländer, the last eight months-- My internship, I told you, was divided into three sections. Three eight-month sections. The last one was in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in close contact with Max J. Friedländer. It must have been at the end of '32 that a man came to Friedländer, an American-- His name was [Clarence Y.] Palitz. He came to Friedländer. He was really a kind of banker. He at that time was involved in some business with Belgian oil refineries; he came over and had some business activities. He was a very successful man in his own field. He must have met somebody in Belgium--in fact I think I even know who it was--who told him, "Oh, Mr. Palitz, you're making now good enough money here. Why don't you invest some of that in works of art?" And so he did. He went around, evidently, and the same man who told him this probably offered things. Anyhow, he was offered a painting by Jordaens. And he was told, "Oh, before you buy such a painting, you must go to Geheimrat Friedländer in Berlin. He is a great expert, and you get his okay saying



that is really all right."

I can only reconstruct what then happened, because he came to Friedländer and told him that he had a photograph of that painting by Jordaens. Friedländer apparently told him, "Oh, I know nothing about that, but I have a young man here who has been studying Jordaens for some time. Why don't you ask him?" So he came to me. I never had met him before, and he didn't know who I was, but a recommendation from Friedländer sort of set wheels turning in his head. He then thought, "Oh, would you perhaps help me in other ways with other pictures?" I said yes.

I think either in the following months or already after I'd been kicked out, he asked me at one point would I be willing to take a trip to Poland, because he had met some Dutch art dealers, and they said that was a good place where you could buy old master paintings. He didn't trust them alone, so he said would I go along with them. Well, I did go along with them. I made a trip in that part of Poland that was called Galicia. We found some paintings, but they were not for sale. What was for sale was no good. Nothing really came of it, but I had a trip. I saw some part of the world that I hadn't seen before, including Lvov--Lemberg-- and Krakow, so I saw some things.

Then he invited me also a few times to Belgium. He stayed in a very fancy resort. It was called Château



D'Ardennes, "the château of the Ardennes mountains." It was one of those fancy places with a golf course and so on. Elegant. I was there probably not more than two times, but for several days, and it was very nice. He played golf or had business conversations. I was pretty much left to myself, but I remember that at one time he told me, "If you hear anything, let me know."

I went one time to him with a photograph of a painting by Cranach. I said, "This is really a very nice piece, and a very respectable dealer in Berlin is offering that." He bought it. That is now in the National Gallery [of Art] in Washington. Do you know the National Gallery in Washington well? It's The Nymph of the Wells. Apparently it is going there as a gift from Clarence Y. Palitz. He bought it and then at a later date he gave it to the National Gallery. But by that time we had had a falling out, and I'll come to that too. But one day when I told him, "Now I have no chances in Germany anymore," he said, "Well, would you like to come to America and just look around?" I said, "Yes, I would like very much." So he said he would send me a ticket, which he did. It was a one-way ticket, but I had to get a visitor's visa for six months. The ticket came in November or December. I have it all in some old diary. I told you I have a diary of that period. In January, I came over.



In the back of my mind was already the idea "If I can, I want to stay." Because I had no future in Europe. My restoration I knew was not going anywhere. I never would earn a dime as a restorer of paintings. So I said good-bye. I made good-bye visits. In my diary I found-- I'd forgotten that I visited Adolph Goldschmidt. Goldschmidt was kicked out, too. I mean, he was a famous man and a great professor, but he also knew that he would have to leave Germany. I found Goldschmidt; I spent about two hours with him and we talked. He told me a little bit about America, and so on. He had been here before. And I wrote down, "I found him tearing up old letters." There's recently a book that came out about the life of Adolph Goldschmidt. And it says when he knew that he had to leave and he couldn't move his entire household to Switzerland, where he eventually did go and died-- He knew he had to give up things. So he tore up whatever correspondence he felt was of no great interest. He must have spent hours and days. I visited him just at that moment.

I went to Heilbronn, where a cousin of mine lived, and I told him, "I have a visitor's visa to America." In his very Swabian dialect he said to me, "You know what I think." In German he said, "Du weisst was ich denk'." "You know what I think." Of course I knew what he thought: Stay there. Just don't come back. That's what I did. All those



months, those first six months or perhaps even longer-- My diary covers only, I think, fourteen months, because then I did other things, and I kept a diary again only when my first child [Anna Held Audette] was born. There it begins again, and that's in English. In 1938, Anna was born, and from then on I kept a diary of the way the children, she and then Michael, grew up. That's written in English. But the first fourteen months from January-- No, it begins in November. In November of '32 to March '35. You see, I started before I left. So those fourteen, fifteen months.

RIKALA: Before you go further, may I interrupt. Will you go back and tell me about this letter that you received when you were doing your internship at the Staatliche Museen?

HELD: It was a carbon copy, not even hand-signed, because one doesn't sign carbon copies. It says, "Herewith I inform you that starting tomorrow you have to leave the premises of the Staatliche Museen." Underneath, "Der Generaldirektor," the director general, but no name and nothing. Just like that. Twenty-four months of intense labor in favor of the museum--unpaid labor--and then set out to the street without much ado. Well, you realize I knew that I had no future there.

So I came, and then I had introductions. Friedländer, for instance, had given me an introduction to [Albert] Barnes, the man of the Barnes Foundation in Merion, near



Philadelphia. Have you heard about the name? It's in the news right now. The Barnes collection is in the news because it was given to a college that is primarily for blacks. I think it's an entirely black college. They own now the Barnes Foundation. There's a question, could they perhaps sell some of the works? Because the building needs a lot of money for restoration and the paintings have not been looked after for half a century, and so on, but the college can't afford it. They only could afford it if they can get permission to sell some things. They have something like a hundred and fifty Renoirs. Now, if they sell ten Renoirs, they still have more than any other institution. So I see no reason why they couldn't. If they need the money to put the collection in the museum and the building in proper shape. I'm all for it, but there are some people who say one should never deaccession anything. I have my ideas about that, but let's not digress too much. So Barnes permitted me to come. There was a concert on a Sunday afternoon, and he said, "Why don't you come over and listen to that concert, and then we can talk a little."

Do you know the writer [Vladimir] Nabokov? He had a nephew who was a musician and composer, Nicolas Nabokov. He was the one who gave a concert. It was one of those concerts with explanations. He talked a little about the things that he was playing, and so on. There was a crowd of



maybe a hundred people, invited guests, at the concert. When the concert was over, Barnes got up. He was very tall, a very impressive-looking man. He said, "We have the pleasure today to have among our guests a young German scholar who because of the situation has come to this country." Then he turned to me and said, "Mr. Held, would you perhaps like to address the crowd?" And, you know, I hardly knew any English. I could understand what he said. I said, "Do you permit me to say it in German?" So I said it in German. Then there was a professor of German at University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, I think. He was there, and he translated the words that I had said. I came back once more to look at the collection. Then in 1937, I had my first employment with New York University. (We can come to all this perhaps more in sequence.) Starting from that moment, I could no longer go to Barnes, because he hated American educational institutions. He didn't believe that they really knew anything about art, and so on. He had his own education. He was a little crazy and very dictatorial. Have you ever heard of Barnes? There's a book about him, The Terrible Mr. Barnes. Well, he wasn't so terrible to me. I mean, he was rather nice.

That man from the university in Philadelphia, he-- Barnes evidently told him, he said, "Why don't you hire this man? You know, he has good recommendations." I had a



meeting then with-- I would have forgotten it, but I found it in his note. His name was Dean [George] Koyl. He was the dean of the faculty. Dean Koyl. He talked to me: he would like very much to see whether he can get me for his department of art history. But nothing came of it for the simple reason that Dean Koyl, of course, expected Barnes to finance that position. He had no open line, you know. He had no line into riches. But hearing that this rich man, Mr. Barnes, had an interest in me, he thought he could persuade him to spit out \$100,000.

RIKALA: For a lectureship for you.

HELD: Yeah, something like this. But Barnes didn't do it, and so I never joined the university in Philadelphia.

RIKALA: But you were originally seeking museum positions?

HELD: Well, I tried everything. I also did do a lot of other things. I gave language lessons. I gave gymnastics lessons. Not too many, but I had-- There was one man who was rather heavy and thought maybe if I gave him gymnastics lessons, he would lose some weight. Some people whom I had met and who became friends then-- You see, I was in a relatively fortunate position. I was still interesting, sort of interesting, for especially the Jewish community of New York. I came in January '34. In '34 or '35, there was just a trickle of people coming over. I was interesting because-- I was handed around, a refugee from the Nazi



regime, and so on. I met some very nice people, and they said, "Maybe we can help you. Would you be willing to give a series of ten lectures and we invite some friends and each one pays \$20? And if you get ten people, you get \$200." That was a fortune for me. So I got myself a secondhand projecting machine and I borrowed the slides from the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. I gave ten lectures at the home of these people. I did all sorts of things.

RIKALA: Was there a group of people particularly trying to help Germans leave?

HELD: Well, of course there were organizations. But I was not-- You see, first of all, Palitz had paid me. Whenever he bought a painting, I did get some payment. It was a relatively small amount compared to what he paid for the picture. I never had a real businesslike arrangement with him. It was just a dole, a handout. He asked my advice and then was kind enough to give me \$50 or \$75 or whatever sum. But since I had given him some advice also in Europe and he had bought already-- I mean, I have already mentioned that he had bought not only that one Jordaens but two other Jordaens, which all were very fine. Then later he bought a small Jan Steen painting, and he bought an Austrian fifteenth-century triptych. Well, anyhow, when I came over from Europe, the money that I brought along, my whole fortune, was \$800. I had \$800, and I came with that to this



country. I spent the first two weeks or so in the home of Palitz, which was in Mamaroneck. It's a little out towards Connecticut, one of the last places in New York on the line to New Haven. I spent about two weeks in that home. Then I rented a room. I paid, I think, \$5 a week for the room. And of course I lived on pennies. So \$800 was a fortune. When I earned another \$200 here or \$50 there, I kept my head over water.

I made the rounds. I tried to meet people. I read again in that old diary that I visited the president of the Metropolitan Museum, whose name was [George] Blumenthal, and he was a Jew. So I thought, as president of the museum, he might do something. But after I had visited him, I wrote in my diary, "There's nothing to hope from Mr. Blumenthal." [laughter] It was so clear to me that he wouldn't make-- He was a figurehead, you know. But I met some people in the museum.

Sometime I'll try to reconstruct the-- Because these are relatively important things about my first employment. It must have happened already in '34. I came in January. I had a six-month visa. During those six months, my main purpose was to get affidavits, to meet people who would be willing to write affidavits for me. All this I have already told you at the restaurant. Then, at the end of August, I went to Montreal and saw the consul, and I got my visa. And



then I established some contact with the National Gallery [of Canada] in Ottawa. All this I have already told before.

But around that same time, I had made the acquaintance of a lady in the education department of the Metropolitan Museum [Roberta Fansler Capers], who became a lifelong friend afterwards. She's still alive, though I haven't seen her now for about a year. She lives in an old people's home in the Berkshires somewhere, all alone. She was married three times, but the first one ended in divorce, the second in death, and the third one again in divorce. She's a wonderful woman. Maybe the men weren't all that great.

[laughter] She had been secretary to the Carnegie Foundation before she went to the Metropolitan Museum and said, "Why don't you apply at the Carnegie Foundation? They have grants." So I made an application.

The trick of that application was that the foundation cannot give the money to you. It has to be channeled through an educational institution. So I had to go to Walter Cook, who was then the chairman of the graduate school of art history [Institute of Fine Arts] at NYU [New York University]. Walter Cook, a very crucial figure in all the histories of the German Jewish refugees in art history. He was a key figure. Absolutely. Wonderful man. Unfortunately a man who drank too much and was somewhat blustery in his manner. But what he did for people is



really amazing. Well, I went to Walter Cook and said, "I have this application and I have a good chance of getting it. Will you be willing to receive it for me and channel it then to me?" It was an application to do some research on Jordaens. As you remember from the other story, I'd always studied Jordaens very much with the idea of writing a book on him, which-- In the end he was good only for a number of articles. So Walter Cook said, "Yes, sure. But if you get it, then you come to me and give me a course in Dutch painting."

RIKALA: So that was your first--

HELD: I started in 1935, started at NYU. One course each term. I got \$300 for each course. And so that was, again, for the year, \$600. You could live on that too. But I had the grant from the Carnegie Foundation, which permitted me to travel to Europe. That is when I traveled. That was in '35, when I traveled, among other things-- Not only to look at Jordaens paintings, but also to look at my future wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held] in Sweden. That is when came that sad moment when we talked over our situation and we decided it won't go.

RIKALA: Because her family--

HELD: Her family would never approve it, you see, and so on. I still had no position. I mean, what I had was--

RIKALA: And you'd been corresponding for four years?



HELD: At that time it was three years, but we corresponded for one more year.

RIKALA: One more year.

HELD: Because I decided then-- After leaving almost tearfully, that it won't go, already the next day I decided I was foolish, and I go on writing. [laughter]

RIKALA: The next day you were in Helsinki.

HELD: Then I was in Helsinki. Then I went to Russia. Are you in touch about Finns and Russians?

RIKALA: Oh, yes.

HELD: Are people in Leningrad Russians?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: That is Russia.

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Now you never know what is Russia, you know.

[laughter] Suddenly you are in the Ukraine when you think you are in Russia. Well, I had that Jordaens material with me. I had a whole briefcase full of photos. Hundreds of photos. Now, if you know Jordaens, you know that he painted a lot of nude women, most of them rather fat. Even fatter than Rubens. [laughter] The Finns were, of course, very, very exact in their customs inspection. I wanted to stay overnight, you know. It wasn't just a trip through. I wanted to stay and look at the museum and so on, so I had to go to a hotel. So they realized I came into the country,



and they wanted to know what goes on. So they look through these photos. Their faces became more serious and serious, and they said, "Oh, you have to come to our supervisor. We can't decide." Then they all asked me, "Why do you have these?" Well, I realized, of course, they thought I'm a salesman in pornography or something like this. [laughter] You know, the Finns are very straitlaced, I have a feeling. Is it true?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: So they really thought I have some sinister ideas about spoiling the Finnish morale. I thought, "My God, what will happen when I get to Russia?" You know, if the same-- Eventually, of course, they let me go. I explained to them. I was really tremblingly looking forward to what was-- The Russians also took my briefcase, and they also took out those photographs. And they look at them and then-- "Come on, come on."

RIKALA: They all started looking at them.

HELD: They all looked at them and they all laughed. They thought it was just wonderful. So the difference between Finns and Russians, you know. They didn't enjoy it for the art, but for the sex. [laughter] Which is exactly what the Finns had objected to.

RIKALA: Yes, I'm sure that's it. Good characterization.

HELD: So. But let's go back now. I had to be back then



again. I started teaching that fall at NYU, the fall of '35. Then in '36, in August of '36-- Was it August or September? I don't remember when she came over, my wife came over. I mean, when she agreed that she'd come over, I thought she must have already decided years-- No, because I had a feeling she wouldn't come over just to reinforce again the no. But just when she came, I was again hired by the National Gallery [of Canada] in Ottawa to come back to Ottawa to give some lectures. So I said to her, "We have to go to Ottawa." Well, we talked it over and it came out. Of course she was going too. I said, "We can't get married here. I have to prepare myself for the trip. We have to postpone this." So she went with me to Ottawa, and we got married in Ottawa. I told you that already.

But what is interesting is that when they heard that she was a trained restorer of paintings-- They didn't have anyone. So her first job over here on this continent was working on some paintings for the National Gallery. I have seen photographs of my wife painting a big Italian panel for the National Gallery. Then quite often when I had to stay in New York and do my teaching, she sometimes had to go for a week or two weeks to Ottawa to paint. So for several years, she had her first job over here. Then starting in 1938 or 1939, she landed a job with the New York Historical Society. For over thirty years she was restorer at the New



York Historical Society on Central Park West. She did a lot of private work too. She was really quite successful as a restorer, and she was very good. As you can see around here, she cleaned and restored all my paintings.

RIKALA: Immaculately cleaned paintings. Where had she received her training as a restorer?

HELD: She got her training in Sweden. But in order to get the last polish, so to speak, she came to Berlin, and that's how I met her. She had received a grant from a Swedish organization to spend a year in-- No, it was maybe not the whole year. A certain length of time in Berlin with the curator, the conservator, of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. Since I had my office next to Friedländer's-- No, two doors down, but, anyhow, on the same floor. And the conservator was on the same floor. We walked past each other, and one day I-- Now, that goes back to 1932. I took my courage and began talking to her. And then we talked once in a while. And she said she was a little shocked-- It was a hot summer, and she was very shocked when one of the first things I said was, "Would you like to swim? There's a wonderful swimming pool in the western part of Berlin," and would she go out with me. She never really liked to swim very much, but she didn't say no. [laughter] But she was a little-- Swedes are also very--

RIKALA: A bit reticent.



HELD: Very reticent. You know the family relations in Sweden even at that time were very formal. My wife never said du to her father. When they sat around the table, I still heard that when I visited them. When she sat there, she would say, "Will Papa noch ein bischen Potato?" Or "still more potatoes?" She did not say, "Do you want some more meat, or potatoes?" "Will Papa this?" or "Kann Papa mir das tun?" That's the way they talked. I have a feeling-- Do you think these personal things would also--? Would you like to hear this? Because this goes into very curious and delicate situations. When she had agreed to marry me, I felt obliged to write a letter to her parents.

RIKALA: But finally she made the decision on her own to marry you? Or had she consulted her parents?

HELD: No, she did not consult. No. She came over. She wanted to see me just once more.

RIKALA: Just check one more time.

HELD: Just check once more whether she really likes me enough--

RIKALA: To get married, that's a big decision. [laughter] That's a long trip.

HELD: So did I. [laughter] Well, she wrote her parents what she decided and who I was, and so on. I wrote, myself, a letter in which I said I know about their attitudes and I only want to tell them that I'll do my best to make her



happy. That's all I could do. I never got an answer. My wife got an answer in which her father said, "Well, you are grown up. You have made your choice. It's up to you to make your life." I mean, they didn't say, "We don't want to see you anymore," anything like this, but they were clearly not happy. And they didn't write to answer me.

Now, in the following year, in 1937-- By that time, I had received my first employment at Barnard College. In the fall, in September of 1937, I had to start my work at Barnard. So during the summer we both decided-- We got married-- Oh, yes. I should tell you that, because that's fun. We got married on the last day of October 1936. And that is Halloween. But in Canada there's no Halloween. Not the kind of celebration that we have. I don't know. Anyhow, no one told us at that time what it really means. Only later did we hear what kind of holiday it was. It's a day easy to remember, you know. So that was in '36.

In '37, in the summer, we both decided we could go to Europe. But I told my wife at the time, "Look, you go to see your parents. I'm not going." We agreed she would go to Sweden and I would do some work in Paris. Then I would go on to Milan and by that time she would come down from Sweden and meet me in Milan, and we would travel together to Israel to see my sister [Ida Held Bloch]. I told her, "If there's anything that you have to communicate with me or



something, send me word through American Express, Milan."

I spent a week traveling. I went out for the first time to Fontainebleau and looked at some of the mannerist paintings and things there. Then I went down to Milan and I went to the American Express. And there was a letter from my mother-in-law saying that I had misunderstood and they would like very much to meet me. Now, there I was. All the plans had been made you know--the plans to go on to Israel--and I had to be in New York in September 1937 to start my first regular full-time job. Here I was in August in Milan, and how do I get to Sweden? I knew I had to go.

So I thought, "How can I go?" I didn't want to go through Germany. You know the geography of Europe. Well, how do I get from Milan to Stockholm without going through Germany? I can take a train again to Paris, go to one of the channel ports. There are some small boats that every second day or so go from Dunkirk or something to Denmark, the west coast of Denmark. Then you take a train across Denmark and a ferryboat from Denmark into Sweden. Then you go up from Sweden on the train. And that would take about two days, if you're lucky, and going back again two days. My whole travel schedule would completely be upset. So I thought, "What can I do?"

At that time a cousin of mine, a lady [Victoria Wolf], lived in Switzerland, in Ancona. I called her up and I



said, "Have you any advice what can I do? Do you think I could go through Germany?" Because I had still a German passport. I was not an American citizen. I had my first papers, but I wasn't a citizen. I had a German passport. But, fortunately, it was a passport that had not yet the "J" in it. All Jewish passports were stamped with a "J" for "Jew." And so, no matter what you did, your passport gave you away. I had a valid German passport without the "J." So she asked me that, and she said, "You know what you could do--" She had heard that at the border when you come by train, they are very strict. They go through your things, and so on. But if you fly-- And flying in 1937 was not what it is today, you know. The planes were much smaller and didn't go so often. But there was at that time a connection. You could fly from Zurich to Stuttgart. And she said, "Try it." I had to go, and I had to take the chance. And it was taking a chance.

RIKALA: That's a big chance.

HELD: A big chance. So I took a plane to Stuttgart and then took a train. On the way to Berlin, I visited an uncle in Heilbronn who still lived there [Julius Wolf]. And I went right on to Berlin and with another train to a German ferry. You know, there's a German ferry to Sweden. So anyhow, instead of spending two or three times going all around, I went through, and nothing happened. I walked out



without being investigated at the airport in Stuttgart and then right on, and I went to Sweden. So this was done in less than a day. I spent a weekend with my parents-in-law, and it was all very nice. Very formal, very correct.

And we left then together. We traveled again through Germany, but by that time, I thought, in the company of a blond Swedish woman, maybe they wouldn't really give me much trouble. So we traveled right through Germany. Not flying. We took a train all the way from the border right through Berlin and south. When the train crossed into Switzerland at the other end of that trip, a great burden fell off my shoulders. I mean, it was a risk, and if anything would have happened, I would never have got out of Germany. Never got out of Germany. No.



TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

JUNE 25, 1991

HELD: When we came across the border of Germany, we traveled straight down to Rome. We stayed a short while only in Rome and then took a train to Brindisi and from there a boat to Haifa. In Haifa I was fetched at the boat by my brother-in-law and my sister [Ida Held Bloch], and then we spent a few days with them.

RIKALA: And they had just very recently--

HELD: They had come the year before. But by that time they had already built this very simple house. I have photographs of these things. Maybe I can look and show them to you.

We stayed also just a few days because our time was short. The term begins always in the beginning of September--this is college--and this was in August, and I had to go back to the States. Of course, at that time you didn't fly. I mean, there were no trans-Atlantic flights. You had to take a boat. The minimum that a boat took was five days--that was the fastest you could make--and sometimes six, seven days if the weather was bad. It was a very nice visit, and despite my sister's original somewhat unhappiness that I didn't marry within the faith, they struck it off very well.

Now, I have to tell you something in between, because



it's part of the story. Because that story became rather dramatic. The same year, I believe, or the year before, an aunt of mine [Cecile Wolf] and her husband [Julius Wolf], the same man who lived in Heilbronn-- You know, I didn't--

RIKALA: We didn't talk much about Heilbronn, but we can come back to it if you want.

HELD: Well, their children, a daughter and a son, had moved also to Israel. Now, at that time, as you know, it was still only Palestine. It was still under the English mandate. The children had moved there, and so the parents decided they wanted to see them once more. I mean, in those years, people never quite-- "Well, we see you maybe the last time." You know, especially when you live almost continents apart. So they went there. They lived in the same community where my sister lived. I saw them also, a cousin of mine [Grete Wolf Mayer] and her husband [Oskar Mayer]. They had three children.

So the aunt and uncle went back on a ship of the Italian line. It was called SS Gerusalemme, an Italian ship. My aunt died on that ship. On the trip from Haifa to Brindisi, she died. Excitement and so on. And grief, too. The boat had to go to Rhodes, because they couldn't take a corpse for any length of time in the heat of the Mediterranean. So she was buried in Rhodes. Then my uncle



proceeded to Heilbronn. He later went to England. Well, let's not go too much into relatives. Anyhow, remember that my aunt had died shortly before on the Gerusalemme.

The ship that we took from Haifa to Brindisi, my wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held] and I, was also S.S. Gerusalemme. The first night on the ship, my wife said, "I feel sick." I looked at her and she clearly had a fever, a high fever. I said, "We must have a doctor." Now, all ships have doctors, so I called the steward. It was in the middle of the night. I called the steward and said, "Can you get a doctor, the ship's doctor?" He left and came five minutes later and said, "He's totally drunk. He's absolutely drunk." The Italian doctor on that ship. [laughter] So we went through the passenger list and I found that there was a Jewish doctor among the passengers, and we got him. He examined my wife, and he gave her some aspirin and I don't know what. She had blood poisoning. She already had a red line along her arm. She was really very sick.

In Brindisi, she was taken with a stretcher down, and she was loaded on the train at Brindisi. The boat-landing thing and the train station are just-- So people carried her. They put her on the train. I was, of course, with her. We traveled together to Rome. In Rome, I took her with a cab or something to the same pensione where we had stayed before. There we then got an Italian doctor, but he



said to me, "Your wife cannot travel for quite some time. She's not in condition." So then I had to think, "What can I do with her?" At that time I had still friends left in Germany. I called up a lady in Mannheim and told her the story and said, "Would you be able to take care of my wife?" She [Held's wife] was not Jewish; there was no problem getting into Germany and getting care. And I asked this lady, "Will you do something for her?" So we traveled, still together-- I helped her. She didn't need a stretcher anymore, but she was very weak. We traveled to Genoa. There was a direct train from Genoa to Mannheim, or Heidelberg, one of the two. She was taken there, and she was put immediately into a hospital. And she stayed another two or three weeks in Germany. I had to go back alone.

RIKALA: You had to start teaching.

HELD: I had to go back because of my teaching. I just had the time barely to get back to my job. So my first job, my wife was still in the hospital in Germany. But she came over and she got well. That's the end of that part of the story.

RIKALA: That's quite a dramatic story.

HELD: There are certain experiences that are etched so clearly in my mind, you know, and this belongs to them.

[tape recorder off]

RIKALA: Before we continue on with being in New York and



the United States, let's go back and talk about Mosbach, your home.

HELD: Mosbach. My hometown. And why the hometown has been of great interest to me in relatively recent years. My family was part of the small Jewish community in Mosbach. I think I've mentioned before there were about 130 or so souls at that time when the Nazi persecution came. Of course a good many of them, fortunately, were able to leave, but quite a number of them were caught and eventually landed, with some detours to southern France, in Auschwitz. There were quite a number, including the rabbi of the town, killed in Auschwitz. The small congregation had a synagogue which was maybe two hundred years old. This picture here shows you the corner of the synagogue. It's rather important that you see it in the context of the other buildings.

RIKALA: Is this a drawing you did?

HELD: No. That was done by another man, Scharf. It was done in 1926, it says here below. It's important because you will see in a moment that this building here--

RIKALA: In the center.

HELD: --reappears again in some other pictures that I want to show you. All this was within a few steps. The tower that you see in this drawing is of the town hall. You see how close by is our house. My parental house was of course very close here, too. So, within a few steps, there was the



synagogue. Now, you may know this or may not. On the night of November 9 and 10, 1938, all synagogues in Germany were destroyed, were burned down. That was a concerted action. Of course, the Nazi government declared it was the anger of the population that spontaneously did that, but it was spontaneously all over the country. Of course it's well known that there was an order from high up that this should be done.

RIKALA: A planned offense.

HELD: So this building that you see here only in part, of course, was also destroyed. Actually, it was destroyed on the morning of the tenth. In other towns, it was during the night, but in my hometown it was done on the morning of November 10. The deed is sometimes now referred to by a somewhat unpleasant word. It's called "Crystal Night," Kristallnacht. "Crystal Night," as if it were just a matter of breaking glass or something. But of course it was aimed at destroying the religious center for that congregation. I knew all this, and I also knew that at some time later--of course there was an empty lot there--someone acquired that lot and built garages there. Now, this is before the war. When I visited after the war my hometown, well, I went where the synagogue used to be, and there were these three garages.

RIKALA: A very ordinary structure.

HELD: Just a place for three cars, you know. The building



was small, because this was only a small place. The man probably acquired it from the town, I presume. There was no one else who could have sold it who really owned the area. I knew all this and had seen the garages there. I was always sad thinking about that. But then one day-- That must be about-- Well, I can tell you exactly when that was. In 1979 I had been in East Germany. In a bookshop, quite accidentally, I saw a book on German synagogues. Not only the pictures of the actual destruction, burning synagogues and so on, this kind of thing, but also pictures of what they looked like originally. There were a great many different styles, sort of Moorish styles, and so on. Some very sumptuous buildings, some very simple country synagogues. Then, on one page, I saw a reproduction which really made me stop. It was the Marktplatz of my hometown. The area where you see the church. You saw my drawing.

RIKALA: Yes, the drawing. That's exactly it.

HELD: You see, that Marktplatz. And there was a picture of the Marktplatz-- I'll show you the picture. This is the Marktplatz. There was still this old monument, and what I saw was a burning pile of things and lots of people standing around. The text tells us that in Mosbach--that was especially mentioned in that book, because it was relatively unusual--they had cleared the synagogue of all the furnishings and the ritual objects and so on, had piled



them up on the Marktplatz and had set fire to it. Children of the school were commandeered to watch this final destruction, this final solution, so to speak, of the Jewish population in Mosbach. Of course it attracted also a great many townspeople. Now, in this photograph you can see there are children, but there are also quite a lot of grown-ups.

RIKALA: All the children are to one side.

HELD: You will ask me a question, but you can postpone your own question because I know what you're going to ask. Here are some more photographs of the things.

RIKALA: Oh, my God.

HELD: The pyre is burning.

RIKALA: Oh, this is horrible. This is very horrible.

HELD: So I have about twelve photos. What I expect you to ask me is "How did you get those photographs?" When I saw that illustration in that book, my first idea was to find out where I could get a copy of that photo. You know, all books have, of course, photo credits. The credit was the archives in Stuttgart. The Staat archives in Stuttgart, in Germany. So on the same trip, I managed to get to Stuttgart. One of my friends at the museum there introduced me to an archivist at the archives. That man was an unusually nice man who had written books. By that time--this was in the seventies--he had already written books on the persecution of Jews in Baden and Württemberg, which is



the area covered by the archives. I told him I saw this illustration and could I get a photo of that. He said, "Oh, we have maybe fifteen or twenty photos of that thing." I asked him how he got those photos, and he said, "No one knows. Certainly no one knows who took them. They got them from the law offices in Mosbach." I mean, they had been kept. I presume those photos were taken in order to keep a record of this final destruction.

RIKALA: Well, that's what's so curious, is that it's so purposeful an event.

HELD: It's photos probably for publication.

RIKALA: That also makes them seem so sinister because-- So deliberate.

HELD: When I saw this photo and heard the story about it, then I decided I really had to do something about it. On November 3, 1979, I wrote a letter, as you see, a two-page letter to the mayor of the town of Mosbach. I wrote in that letter that I saw this and I think it is a shame that the place where a house of worship stood should now be almost desecrated with garages. I said I would like very much to start an action, that perhaps money could be collected and that these things could be torn down and the place restored to something else. I got a friendly but noncommittal answer to that letter.

It took another year for me to go once more over there.



At that time I thought, well, my name didn't mean anything to that mayor, but-- That mayor of Mosbach, by the way, had come from Czechoslovakia originally. He was not even a native. My name didn't mean anything, and that I'm a professor in America didn't mean much to him either. But I decided I wanted to make an appointment with him anyhow. Just two nights before-- It was on a Monday was the appointment. But on Saturday I talked to a professor in Heidelberg [Wolfgang Jaeger] who had been very friendly with me for some time for other reasons. He was an ophthalmologist, a professor of ophthalmology in Heidelberg. Very famous man in his field. He said one of his students is an eye doctor in Mosbach. He called him up. That eye doctor, when he heard from Professor Jaeger in Heidelberg, then went to the mayor and told him that Professor Jaeger in Heidelberg is interested in the case and prepared him for my visit.

When I came, suddenly the reception was quite different, was much more respectful. Then I had a lawyer with me from Heidelberg, a friend of mine [Klaus Zimmermann]. I don't know if I've mentioned the name before in these conversations. Old family friend, but still young. He came along. The mayor invited him and me and the architect of the town for lunch. I talked to the architect of the town, who turned out to be a very helpful and very



nice man. He said to me, "You are coming at the right moment, because we did get money for urban renewal. We have already finished one-third of the town, and the second third is now coming up. The synagogue place is located in the second third of that thing. Maybe we can work your project into the urban renewal plan."

Well, now, I don't want to bore you and burden you with all the correspondence that went on for about six or eight years. At any rate, I can tell you that when it really came to fruition was in 1986. Well, when was this? 'Seventy-nine? It took seven years. Seven years. The whole thing was accomplished; the garages had been torn down. On July 9, 1986, at five in the afternoon, a solemn consecration.

RIKALA: Oh, how beautiful. Here's everyone. And there are musicians in this photograph.

HELD: Now it comes to something I haven't mentioned. In all the negotiations-- Look at this picture, because you can identify that house in that photo.

RIKALA: Yes, it's right here.

HELD: You see, it's over there. In those negotiations I had told the people in Mosbach who were engaged in this whole thing, especially the architect of the town, that I would like to donate a plaque. I would want to write the text myself. I had a little fear that the town would say, "Oh, no, no, no. We don't want you to do this sort of



thing." But it was done. It was accepted. I donated it, and in that consecration thing, here is the stone with the plaque. These are some pictures. Of course I made the mayor of the-- By that time there was another mayor. The other one had been voted out, and a very much nicer man was voted in.

RIKALA: So it's a plaque on a commemorative stone on this little plaza.

HELD: And here is the plaque. Here in this plaque, here is the text. Can you--?

RIKALA: You should read it. Better you read it than me!

HELD: Well, I'll translate it: "This place is dedicated to the memory of the Jewish citizens of Mosbach. In twelve calamitous years, they were deprived of their human dignity, driven from their homeland, or transported into death camps. Their house of worship which stood here was destroyed on November 10, 1938, its furnishings publicly burned on the marketplace. Don't you forget it." That is the text. This was the program of the dedication. There was a little music, and there were speeches by the mayor. What I said at that occasion, I don't know. I had no text. It was a short response to the mayor.

Now, you know, of course, that two years later, in '88, was the fiftieth anniversary of the "Crystal Night," the destruction of the synagogues. That was on the tenth. The



town of Mosbach invited me to go back and to make the real address, you know. I don't want to read it, because that's in German. But, you see, this is then a major, a long speech in memory of the "Crystal Night" and so on, what was done. So I didn't mince words. I did say what was needed. They made, by the way, a tape recording of my speech. So the town has it. That was in '88. Fifty years. Incidentally, that was commemorated all over Germany. Fifty years of "Crystal Night."

Then last year again--two years later, in '90--my town, Mosbach, invited me again to give me a plaque. I had to make a short speech again, a thank you in recognition of the plaque. Last year, then, they surprised me then also with the reproduction of my old drawing. That is really the whole story, and I thought you should perhaps have that to round out the picture of my relationship to my own hometown.

RIKALA: Let's begin this afternoon talking about your teaching in New York. What I'm interested in is to find out a little bit about what it was like for you to start. Your first big teaching experience is here in the United States at Barnard [College], at NYU [New York University]. You hadn't been a teacher previously.

HELD: I had not.

RIKALA: So here you are in a foreign country, with a foreign language, at a different kind of institution. What



was your thinking? How did you think about preparing your classes? What were your expectations of the students? Those kinds of impressions.

HELD: Well, first of all, I should mention that while it is true I never taught any classes at all before I came to this country, I had been giving talks to groups of people who visited the Berlin museums. Because part of the duty that I had while I worked in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin was taking groups through the museum and giving them talks. I did it, of course, in the area in which I worked, let's say the gallery of paintings in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. But I also, for instance, remember that several times I gave talks in the Pergamon Museum about the famous Pergamon Altar, which had been installed just in those years in a new museum. So I had some experience in public speaking, because you had no manuscript or anything there.

You remember that Walter Cook was the one who hired me, and you said you wanted to ask me something about Walter Cook. Walter Cook has become famous for one sentence, for one statement that he made and which is often quoted, even in more recent days. He said, "Hitler shook the tree, and I picked up the apples." He was really a man who used the opportunity of the European scholars, mostly German scholars or Austrian scholars who came over because of the persecution of Jews. He made it possible for them. He asked them to



teach courses. He was the head of the graduate department of fine arts [Institute of Fine Arts] of New York University. The staff was really small, but it then gradually grew, mainly with people who came from abroad.

When I came, I remember only that there was Offner. Richard Offner was there, but he was not a refugee. He had been already part of the Institute of Fine Arts at NYU, which was, by the way, located in the eighties somewhere. I think it was Eightieth Street, between Fifth [Avenue] and Madison Avenue. And then there was [Rudolf] Meyer Riefstahl, who also-- This is the old staff. Meyer Riefstahl, who died a number of years later. Then came a man from Europe. There was Lehmann-Hartleben, Karl Lehmann-Hartleben. I think he later dropped the Hartleben and was called only Karl Lehmann, because he divorced his German wife and married an American lady who is herself a professor. Now she's a professor emeritus of Smith College, by the way. Mrs. Lehmann. Phyllis [Williams] Lehmann.

RIKALA: Oh, Phyllis Lehmann.

HELD: She had married Karl Lehmann, you know, as it is not uncommon: the teacher married his student and divorced his previous wife. Then came other people. There came Weinberger, Martin Weinberger, and then [Guido] Schönberger, both of these German scholars. [Erwin] Panofsky I think did also teach at some time at NYU. Well, surely there may be



other people who should be mentioned. The tradition kept on of the European scholars. NYU always was interested in getting people from Europe either as refugees or sometimes simply because they were distinguished. Charles Sterling, for instance, taught there. Of course that was much later.

RIKALA: Was it a particular policy of NYU, or was it a focus through Cook?

HELD: Well, it was not NYU so much, because there was a downtown school, and they had hardly any refugees, but the graduate department had. And of course, as I told you, Cook was the one through whom I did get that Carnegie [Foundation] grant, when he said he would be willing to be the intermediary only on the condition that I also then would teach a course for him. Then for about six years I did teach one course per term. Many of them were lecture courses, but there were also some seminars occasionally. Most of them were lecture courses. What I did is I wrote down what I wanted to say word for word.

RIKALA: Did you take as a model your education?

HELD: No, no. The teachers in Germany, the professors, only rarely-- Yes, there was one professor in Berlin that was a Byzantinist by the name of [Oskar] Wulff. He apparently read. He was so shortsighted anyhow, and he looked always down on something, so I presume he read from a manuscript.



But other professors talked freely. I didn't know enough English to trust my vocabulary that the right word would come out at the right moment, so I wrote things down.

Now, Cook had requested all the people who taught at his department that they would write a syllabus so that the students could then study from the syllabus. All the slides that had been shown were listed on that syllabus. It might have been helpful for the students, but the syllabus was mimeographed-- They didn't have Xerox copies then, but I mimeographed it. The students, for twenty-five cents, could buy that syllabus. For years and years, my courses were taught all over the country by students who had bought the syllabus. When they were hired then by smaller colleges, they just used my syllabus, and Dutch painting and Flemish painting was then taught from that syllabus. In fact, one student got a job to write some entries for the Columbia Encyclopedia, entries on individual artists. I discovered years and years later that she had copied most of that from my syllabus. These are harmless things. Much more serious things happened in other respects, as well. Every scholar can tell tales of where he was too trusting or too careless or something, and other things that were used by somebody else.

RIKALA: Did you take your students to the museums?

HELD: Oh, yes. That remained a part of my education



always, that I always would take-- Not the lecture courses. I had quite often over a hundred students. But seminars I very often took to the museum. In connoisseurship seminars when I was at Columbia [University], I very often brought originals into the seminar session. I mean some of my own paintings. Sometimes I borrowed things. I remember we once visited a famous collector of drawings, Janus Scholz, who was also a well-known cellist. I took my students there. And Scholz himself gave a course on drawing. Later on, when he gave a course, of course he invited his students into his house without me. But I also remember that I once before had taken my students to his place. So taking them to private collections then was also part of the program. That is running ahead. That was mainly when I was at Barnard and Columbia.

At NYU, the thing became a little more difficult when I also was hired at Barnard. Because you must remember, I started in the fall of 1935, but two years later I was hired by Barnard College for a full-time job. The load was always three courses each term, mainly two lecture courses and one seminar. The seminar was then quite often given at Columbia, because my job at Barnard was always linked. One-third of my activity was at Columbia in the graduate school, and two-thirds was at Barnard. So the load, always split, was two and one on both sides of the street. I was, quite



comfortably, originally at NYU with only one course each term, but suddenly I was finding myself with four courses each term: three uptown at Columbia, at Barnard, and one at NYU.

RIKALA: So you were very busy.

HELD: I did that for about four more years, and then I stopped.

RIKALA: Was there ever any opportunity to become a full-time professor at NYU?

HELD: No. It was much too early. No.

RIKALA: Well, because you became hired at Barnard and Columbia.

HELD: First of all, I don't think that the question ever came up. I don't think NYU had any interest in trying to get me full-time. I can't blame them. They had some very good people there. And you must not forget that I was still relatively young, not really so young as some others were at the time that had such jobs, but I had really not published very much. I had a number of articles, and I had my dissertation, but I had not produced any body of work that would have justified them taking me. So I understand. But it was eventually simply too much for me to carry such a load.

You might be interested to know how it came that I got hired by Barnard. Of course, in the first few years, I was



very much interested to learn more about American universities, who teachers were and who is where, and so on. I remembered, for instance, that in Berlin I had already heard a lecture by Paul [J.] Sachs, who was at Harvard [University], you know. He was not only a professor but a collector, perhaps more of a collector than a professor. I had heard him in Berlin when he had come, been a very honored guest from America, and he gave a lecture at an art historical organization. So I learned from him something that I then applied myself, although-- Well, let me tell you this-- When he had finished his talk, Paul Sachs in Berlin said, "I thank you." The last words of the lecture, "I thank you." In German, of course, "Ich danke Ihnen." Well, I looked around. That was something I had never heard from any lecturer. No one in Germany would end a talk like this, with a word of thanks. Then when I came to this country, of course, I heard that's very common. I mean, to tell them that you're finished by simply saying, "Thank you."

Well, I had learned, for instance, also that a great center of art history is Princeton [University], and the head of the Princeton department was Morey, Charles Morey. Charles Rufus Morey. I heard in 1936 that Morey was going to give a seminar on Byzantine art at the [Pierpont] Morgan Library. I went to him and said, "I'm new here, and I'd like to learn things and how things are done. And this



whole field is completely unknown to me." Would he mind if I sit in just as an auditor? He said, "No, it's a seminar. I can't really do that, but if you are willing to read a paper like any other student, that would be fine." So I said, "Okay." And as a topic, he gave me the mosaics at Kariye Camii in Constantinople. And of course, it was totally unknown to me. [laughter] I'd never heard the name before. But I read a paper. I wrote it, and then I read it. He was pleased with the paper, and I'm sure he told me so.

One of his former students was Marion Lawrence, who was the chair of the art history department at Barnard College. Morey being her great god-- She had been a pupil of his and swore by whatever he said, although his theories today, I understand, are no longer really believed by Byzantinists. But he must have told her when there was an opening at Barnard. I suspect that she asked Morey whether he could recommend anyone, and I presume that he said, "Why don't you take Julius Held, who has given a good paper in my seminar." It is, of course, also possible-- I mean, this is all conjecture, but-- It is conjecture that she was present when I read that paper. You know, it's possible. But I think it was more Morey who said so.

I was at that time, that is in the late summer of 1937, just in Canada again--I believe it was Canada. One of my trips. I got a telegram from Marion Lawrence: Would I be



able to come down and see her with the possibility of perhaps getting a job? So I of course immediately went down, and she talked to me and she said, "We have this and this to offer as a lecturer." I was offered a job as a lecturer, and it had to be cleared not only with the dean of Barnard but also with the head of the department at Columbia, because the Barnard [art] history department and the Columbia [art] history department were linked. They had a common chairman. [William Bell] Dinsmoor was then chairman. He was, I think, legally also the chairman of the Barnard department. So he had approved, anyhow. This was a matter of course. I mean, Marion Lawrence was the chairman of the Barnard department, and she would have been very much surprised if Dinsmoor would blackball an appointment she would make. She was always a little touchy.



TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

JUNE 25, 1991

RIKALA: What kind of reputation did Barnard have at that time?

HELD: Barnard in general?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: A good reputation. They had Dean [Virginia] Gildersleeve. Have you ever heard the name?

RIKALA: No.

HELD: She was a powerful woman and had a national name, because when the United Nations was founded, she was one of the delegates. So she was one of the best-known persons in women's education. You see, Barnard was of course strictly a women's college.

RIKALA: And it's an undergraduate college. So, primarily, did you give large lecture courses?

HELD: Well, at Barnard the system was this: there were three hours each week, and two hours were lecture courses and the third hour you talked to smaller groups. If you had seventy students in your class, you met the students in smaller groups, let's say ten students for each group. So I taught, of course, many additional hours.

RIKALA: Well, that's a very heavy work load, I mean in terms of actual time spent with the students.

HELD: That was most punishing for me. Not so much the



lecture or even the seminars--you know, the small seminars--but the paperwork, the grading of papers and the grading of exams. You know, you had to give exams during the course and at the end of the course. You had assigned papers and you read them. If the class grew above a certain number, I was given readers, graduate students usually, who then would be the readers of the papers, or mainly exams. The papers, by and large, I wanted to read myself, but the blue book exams, the tests in other words, would be then graded by readers. I never found it a very satisfactory system because I've quite often thought that some of the graders didn't have the maturity or the knowledge or something to do really a good job. On the other hand, it just was impossible for me with all the other things that I had to do. Of course in my graduate courses, there I had no help. Quite evidently, it would not have been right. Graduate students, whatever education they get should be directed from the teacher, not from secondhand. So I had to read sometimes very long papers of graduate students.

One of the strange things in this country for me was when the students came to me and-- I assigned a paper and they said, "How long should the paper be?" This was always a question that I never quite understood. I always said, "Well, do a good job and it doesn't matter." Later on I mentioned to students that one of the best papers I ever had



at Barnard College was from a woman who I wish I had known whatever happened to her, because she was rather impressive. She wrote a two-page paper, and it was a straight-A paper. She said everything that was needed. And so this "How long should the paper be?"-- [laughter] Sometimes you just tell them-- For instance, to undergraduates I said, "Don't write more than ten pages," or more than fifteen pages, or whatever I said. Because it's just so much more burden. After a few years I thought, "The same questions and the same problems come up and also the same mistakes are made," so I wrote down ten commandments for students for term papers. I still have a sheet somewhere of my ten points, ten points to remember when you write a term paper. Don't fill it up with quotations and so on; don't pad it with words and whatever. Maybe I'll find it and can show it to you.

RIKALA: Those things are always useful.

HELD: My ten commandments. So you learned, because you were told by your chairman, chairperson, or so. You were told what to do and how to handle these, and so on. Once we had a very bad case of plagiarism. Barnard worked under an honor code, and of course there had been a meeting with the honors delegates or something.

RIKALA: Yes, the committee.

HELD: The student got a warning, but nothing very serious



happened. Many of these papers were on pictures in New York museums, and she wrote on a painting by Cranach in the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. It was a beautiful paper. It was written so well that I immediately thought, "This is not the style of a Barnard student." So then I thought for a moment and said, "Oh my God, I have--" I remembered Harry [B.] Wehle, the curator of the Metropolitan Museum, had written an article on that painting. Of course I found it very quickly. I went to that article, and the student had just copied that article of Wehle's. The student had the bad luck of copying one of the finest stylists in English that I read at that time. Wehle was not what you would call a great scholar. I mean, he was a wonderful human being, and when he died I even was one of the speakers in his funeral service. I read a few words in his memory. Well, when he wrote something it was just poetry. That poor student had not enough judgment to realize that no student can write like that. She just copied it.

RIKALA: What a foolish mistake.

HELD: Pretty foolish.

RIKALA: Who made up the core faculty at Barnard at this time, in the thirties and forties? .

HELD: The chair was Marion Lawrence. She was a classicist. All her life she wrote the text for a book which in the end never was published on sarcophagi, city-gate sarcophagi,



sort of the late Roman, early Christian--it's really early Christian--type of sarcophagus. She collected the material--surely no one ever had so much material on the city-gate sarcophagi--but she didn't get it done somehow. Then there was Marianna Byram, who was a very lovely person who had taught courses in prints and drawings, mainly prints. She had not written much. She also had no Ph.D. She probably had a master's. The students loved her. She was a wonderful person, and the material that she showed and how she explained things was very good. The students learned a lot from her, but she had no--I use it really in quotation marks--she had no "distinction" as a scholar. But she was successful, and she was much loved. Then there was a lady--She was mentioned in that fiftieth anniversary thing that I showed you there. I can't think of her name.

Gaston, and she married Mahler. Later she was Gaston Mahler. She was Chinese, Asiatic art. [Jane Gaston Mahler]

RIKALA: That was one of my questions. So there was interest in non-Western.

HELD: No, it was Asiatic art, and I think she was also quite successful. Was there anyone else at Barnard? No. It was not a large department. Of course, there were changes later.

RIKALA: And then at that time at Columbia--

HELD: Columbia had very distinguished people. I mean,



Meyer Schapiro was at Columbia. By the way, I had always a part of an office at Columbia. In fact, the Barnard staff until much later had no real space, office space, in Barnard.

RIKALA: Really? It was always Columbia?

HELD: We had office space at Columbia. Because the library also was at Columbia. Our students used also the Columbia library.

RIKALA: The art history and architecture libraries were shared, weren't they? What becomes the Avery?

HELD: The architecture library--that's Avery Library--that was in a separate building. But the art history library was in Schermerhorn Hall. Later on it was joined to Avery. Now the art history library is in the basement of Avery, but in my time it was on the eighth floor of Schermerhorn. There were racks--we would put the slides up there so that the students could look at the slides. After each lecture I had to go over there with my box of slides and put them on these racks, and then the students would go and look at them. We also had a photo collection, but it wasn't worth very much, and it never really amounted to very much either. It wasn't, I think, used very much, except perhaps in exams when you pulled out a photo and could show it to students to identify. You asked me about faculty. Millard Meiss was there for quite a number of years. Dinsmoor himself was



a very distinguished archaeologist. Then there was a Professor [Elmer] Swift. Swift was also archaeology, I believe. He lived in Princeton and commuted for his classes. You never saw much of him around, because he gave his courses and disappeared. I hardly ever exchanged a word with him. Unfortunately, Columbia-- In those years, the faculty was split in almost two sections, who were very antagonistic to each other. So on the other side was Upjohn, Professor [Everard M.] Upjohn, who was teaching primarily in the college, and then there was [Paul S.] Wingert, who also taught in the college. He taught primitive art. And Gaston Mahler was also part of that group. I mean, she taught at Barnard, but she also taught humanities courses, I think.

RIKALA: What was the nature of this split, this factionalism?

HELD: I think personalities played a great role.

RIKALA: Schapiro was a very strong personality?

HELD: I don't know, it's hard for me to say. I hate to even say that perhaps anti-Semitism may have played a role. I'm not sure.

RIKALA: Well, I was going to ask about that, whether Columbia was--

HELD: Meyer Schapiro and Millard Meiss and I, we were Jews. We were really on the other side, although I played a very



minor role in this thing. It was then really the question who should be the chairman of the whole department. It came to a point where there was such disagreement about who should be the chairman of the whole department that the university decided they had to bring in someone from the outside. A professor for two years, a professor outside of Columbia [Albert Hofstadter], was really the chairman of the art history department. He was not an art historian, but he was a peacemaker, so to speak, or the buffer. During this time, the university looked around for somebody who'd have the stature to have respect as a scholar and at the same time would be a strong enough personality to avoid any personality clashes within the thing. And that person then was [Rudolf] Wittkower.

RIKALA: The split must have caused some sort of crisis for the students. I mean, the students must have perceived it as well.

HELD: Oh, yes, and there were some students who I think were more on our side, if I count myself. The thing is this, that basically Schapiro and Meiss, above all, had really not much respect for the work which the others had done.

RIKALA: Because truly they were poor scholars?

HELD: As scholars.

RIKALA: Were they truly lesser?



HELD: Upjohn had written a book on an ancestor of his who was a famous architect, you know, in New England [Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman]. I don't know if the ancestor-- Now you've got me in an embarrassing situation, because I don't think it was--

RIKALA: Well, we can look it up.

HELD: The only other thing that that group published and which they used then all the time was a world history, a one-volume-- Not world history, world art history. A general book on art history. It was done really as a financial thing. Of course, all the students in these humanities courses had to buy that book, you know. Meyer Schapiro, perhaps rightly, felt that that is not really a major contribution to the history of art. I mean, it's a survey. Of course it takes some knowledge and it takes some industry to write it, but it's not an original contribution. He felt a little that perhaps it was also too much a calculation to make additional money, you know, with something that then could be assigned as a text.

RIKALA: Certainly Schapiro was also very theoretically driven in looking at art history. Was there any sort of conflict in perhaps his mind that art history wasn't being addressed in a more theoretical way?

HELD: I don't think that-- He had not, let's say, a theoretical argument against the other people because they



had no strong theoretical stance. You see, you could have a conflict because people have one theoretical position and another another one, and you can argue and you can have a falling-out among such scholars. Of course, he had a very strong approach--I mean, sociological and so on. We know his interest in historical economics and sociology, which were important for his interpretation of art. But on the other side, there were not people that had any real theoretical standing or conviction.

He had no respect for what they were doing. He didn't want that any of them should take over the chairmanship of the whole department. Not that he would suffer or that others that he liked would suffer, but his conviction was that if any one of them takes over-- If Upjohn, let's say, becomes the chief head of the entire department, he might then hire people who are not-- He would dilute, so to speak, by hiring incompetent people. So that was Meyer Schapiro's chief worry. Meyer, of course, had been a product of the school. He did his undergraduate work at Columbia and all of his graduate work and had a Ph.D. from Columbia. So he felt that this is his school, and he didn't want that school to be run down by incompetence.

RIKALA: Great respect. So Wittkower filled the bill, then, in Schapiro's eyes, too.

HELD: Well, yes. I don't know who really proposed him, but



the university investigator, of course, who would come--

RIKALA: What year was that, then? Oh, roughly.

HELD: No, I can't tell you that. I'm sorry.

RIKALA: Oh, that's okay. I might have it in my notes.

HELD: It is in that piece that I wrote for the College Art Association [of America] when I wrote the history of-- That is there, of course. Of course a number of good scholars had in the meantime grown up, trained by some better people. Unfortunately, several of these younger people died young. There was Milton Lewine, who was one of the promising young scholars. He was a student of Wittkower's. He had been also a student of mine, by the way. Then there was Branner, Bob [Robert] Branner, who was a medieval architecturalist. He belonged to that young group of promising scholars, and the department began looking up, you know. Then [Howard] Hibbard came. Hibbard was entirely Wittkower's student. So you had not only the older group of people, but there was really a very distinguished and promising group of younger people. Every one of them died. Milton died, Bob died, and Howard died. Then there was still another one, whose name at the moment I can't think of, who was in Oceanic and primitive art.

RIKALA: [Esther] Pasztory?

HELD: No, Pasztory, she's still there. No, she's very good. She's quite good. Do you know her?



RIKALA: I know a little bit about her.

HELD: But there was another man, and he had psychological problems and suffered from deep depressions. He was also, I think, considered promising, a good man, but I can't even think of his name right now.

RIKALA: Wittkower's interest, then, in iconography and--

HELD: Architecture. Architecture.

RIKALA: Did that have an impact, his--?

HELD: Yes. Impact where? Just at Columbia or in general?

RIKALA: Well, start at Columbia. Obviously in general it did, but--

HELD: Well, I think people still read his books. His book on Italian baroque architecture [Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600 to 1750] helped me a great deal when I wrote my book on baroque [Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Art: Baroque Painting, Sculpture, Architecture], you know that one-volume thing I did with [Donald] Posner, Held and Posner. Wittkower's book was very useful for me at that time. Although I'd given courses on baroque before that myself, he was much more of a specialist in that field than I ever was. I just wonder what I have forgotten. When I was chairman-- You know, I was chairman of the art history department only for three years, because Marion Lawrence held onto that position forever. Let me tell you something about my--



RIKALA: It was in '67.

HELD: Yeah, '67. I was lecturer at Barnard College from 1937 to '44, and then I was made assistant professor--which was a yearly appointment--from 1944 to 1950. So for thirteen, almost fourteen years, I had only an annual appointment. I was never sure that I would be hired again. Then in '44-- When was that thing with Yale [University]? No, in '54-- You see, from 1937 to '54, I had no firm employment. In 1954, Yale University invited me to give a course or two courses, I've forgotten. Visiting professor at Yale. Then certainly Barnard College got alarmed, because they thought maybe they wanted to look me over, you know. Actually, I don't think they had any intention. But then certainly in '54, I got a promotion to associate professor, which also gave me tenure. So only after fourteen years and because of an invitation to another school, I got tenure.

RIKALA: Shook them up.

HELD: Now, wait a minute, there's something wrong. If this is correct, then I said something wrong before. I had an annual appointment only until 1950, from 1937 to 1950. In 1950 I was made associate professor--well, it's all on that sheet--and then in '54 I was made full professor. Then I was full professor from '54 to '67--that's another thirteen years. And only once during that period was I acting



chairman, because that was when Ms. Lawrence had a sabbatical. She went away on a sabbatical, and during that year I was acting chairman. I used that to hire a European scholar to give a course on, I don't know, probably Austrian baroque or something. That was Werner Hoffmann, who later became the director of the Hamburg Kunsthalle and has written many very well-considered books. I hired him for Barnard for the course in that one year in which I was acting chairman. When she retired in '67, for three years I was chairman. So in that whole period from '37 to '70, I was a chairman only three years.

RIKALA: What were the interests--? Maybe policy would be too much of a word, but the interest in general in developing women as art historians at Barnard? It's a women's college.

HELD: I told you there were three women and only one man. We had a student who later-- No, she was a Columbia student. But she then later began to teach at Barnard too. That is Jane Rosenthal, who is still there. Then when I retired, the next chairperson for Barnard was one of my former students there. That is Barbie Novak. You know her?

RIKALA: Barbara Novak? Yes.

HELD: She is still chairman--or maybe not. Maybe someone else. I'm no longer in close contact with the department at Barnard. So with that one exception for three years, there



was always a woman chairman at Barnard. And Barnard today-- I saw that from the catalog-- I think that they employ more women than men. The balance is definitely in favor of women.

RIKALA: I guess I'm also curious about-- Art history has always been a field where there have been both women and men. I was wondering if there was any sort of special consideration given at a women's college to see to it that in addition to having jobs in their own school again once they graduate-- If there was a special, somehow, support structure to help these women advance past their undergraduate, or not.

HELD: Well, Barnard, of course, since only women started at Barnard-- They had of course an organization to help students find jobs. What's the official title of such things? Career opportunities?

RIKALA: Career placement.

HELD: Placement. That's it. They had that always. They did their best to find jobs for them. And Barnard had always very distinguished people, also in other fields. They had a lady, Latham, had a double name [Minor White Latham], who organized theater performances on a very high level with students. They had a very good chemistry staff. They had a fine ethnological and sociological professor, [Gladys] Reichard, I think. They were all rather



distinguished people. They had an excellent Spanish department when I was there and a good French department.

Languages were good. Then the English department also had some fine people. Of course there were also difficulties with regard to some fields where some people came who taught areas that were not in the regular structure of the college organization. One such person was Rosalie Colie. You don't know her?

RIKALA: No.

HELD: Well, I'll tell you more about her a little later, because she's an important figure and I personally was-- We were very close, a friendship, I mean of the family; there was nothing else. But really warm friendship. One of the most brilliant people I ever met. I'll show you some books of hers. Well, she taught what now is of course recognized as an important field, the history of ideas. But when she came to Barnard and gave courses in the history of ideas, there was really great difficulty, which ended in her leaving the college. Because the history department said, "This is not history. Wars and kings, that's history. But not history of ideas." The English department said, "Oh, that's history and we are an English department." She could not teach, read, or was not recognized as a full member, and a distinguished member, either of the English or the history department. But there were other schools in this country who would take her. She was very prolific. She wrote books



on mainly English seventeenth-century poetry. Well, I want to show here some of the books. She had a tragic life, too. She went around to many schools. She taught for a while in Iowa, which has an apparently very fine English department where there is a certain kind of freedom given to people who are not exactly teaching only strict English subject matter. Then she was in Toronto for a while, and her last job was at Brown University.

At that time she had married. She was married to a man, a physicist, who had received actually the Nobel Prize in physics. He was a teacher at Yale. She taught at Brown, and he taught at Yale. And they bought a house in one of those lovely little seashore towns--Old Lyme I think it's called--where she came from Providence [Rhode Island] and he came from New Haven [Connecticut]. Well, it seemed to be wonderful, and it wasn't at all in the end. In order to marry her, he had divorced his first wife, who incidentally had been a professor at Barnard College. He divorced her, and they got married and they lived together for quite a number of years. At one moment, he said he wanted a divorce from her: he wants to go back to his first wife. There may have been other things. I suspect also that she had some worries about her health. But this decision of his to go back to his first wife shook her so, I mean unsettled her so, she committed suicide. She is a great loss. In this



particular field, she has a great reputation. I want to show you some of her books.

RIKALA: Do you have particular recollections of World War II during your teaching and what it was like here in the U.S.?

HELD: Well, yes, I have some recollections. A variety of recollections. I gave a lecture in-- I think in '44. In '43 or '44, I gave a lecture in Norfolk. I told you before that I lectured a great deal all over the country. I was often invited to give lectures. In Norfolk, Virginia, there was a museum. One of the trustees was a very charming elderly lady, and she invited me several times over a number of years. Always once a year I would come and give a lecture at Norfolk. I was just there in Norfolk when I got a telegram from Bryn Mawr [College] that the professor of art history at Bryn Mawr. His name was-- Is the date of the Bryn Mawr thing there?

RIKALA: Nineteen forty-four.

HELD: 'Forty-four. Yes. They had a German refugee as a professor. He was drafted into the army. They called me up, sent me a wire, and said, "Can you take over his courses?" I said, "Yes." It was an additional burden, but I thought that everyone has to do his duty and help out. So I kept all my courses at Barnard and Columbia. I had to do it in this way: On Monday morning I would give a course at



Barnard, let's say, in the morning. Then I rushed down to Pennsylvania Station and took a one o'clock train to Philadelphia, then a local train there out to Bryn Mawr--you know, there's a special line; they call it "the mainline"--and gave an afternoon course or seminar, whatever it was, there. Then I stayed overnight, gave another course at Bryn Mawr on Tuesday morning, and then rushed back and did a course in New York in the afternoon. And then again all through the week. So I carried all this. And of course predictably what happened, I got an ulcer attack and had a very bad siege with ulcers. Well. So I did teach. I took over these courses for the end of the term of that man who had been hired.

Then, of course, during those years I had to do a great many other things to try to bring out refugees from Europe. During that period in the early forties--it must have happened in '41 or '42--I had tried to bring a cousin of my father's [Johanna Roth] out, quite a wonderful person. She had been deported to Gurs in southern France. I wrote to her and sent her things to that camp and made appeals to Washington. One day I was on our farm--you know what I mean--and I got word from Washington that a hearing would be held and I should come down. I left "Pim," my wife, and the children there--oh, no, it was only Anna [Held Audette]; [James] Michael [Held] hadn't been born yet--and I rushed to



Washington. There was a hearing, the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the State Department and all these organizations. They had to look through the papers, and they said, "Yes, all right. We grant you. You can bring that lady in." She would have to go to see the consul, the American consul in Marseilles. She was in a camp in the Pyrenees, at the foot of the Pyrenees. I rushed word to her, but it was only a letter. At that time, connections were very poor, you know. You couldn't telephone or couldn't cable or anything. I wrote a letter and the letter came back, "parti sans adresse." That is, "departed without leaving an address," because the Germans by that time had emptied all the people in that camp and in trains had taken them to Auschwitz and they were all gassed. And the chief fault for the crime was committed by the Germans, but our government procrastinated months and months and months until they finally gave me permission. If I had received that permission half a year before, I could have saved her. You have been upstairs in the bathroom?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: There hangs a picture of a lady with a hat--have you seen?--the big hat. That is that lady. She was a victim of the persecution. So these are some of my war experiences. Well, otherwise, I don't know whether there is anything remarkable to be mentioned. No one, as far as I know, was



drafted from Columbia at the time. I don't think so.

RIKALA: Was there an impact just on the daily life of the school, aside from the daily life in general? Obviously World War II had an impact. But university life continued?

HELD: I don't remember. I don't remember really very much of those years. But what I do remember very distinctly are the troubles in 1968.

RIKALA: Really. The uprising.

HELD: The uprising in 1968.



TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

JUNE 25, 1991

RIKALA: You talked about the paperwork of teaching, reading students' papers and things. Your schedule was extraordinary. How did you then learn to do your own scholarship? Where did you fit that in? Because that's important.

HELD: Let me tell you this. Those were, in many ways, very difficult years. I mean, I'm talking now of the period from 1937, when I joined Barnard [College], until the end of the war, something like this. I had already published a few things in Germany. I had written an article--I think I mentioned it before--"Two Views of Paris," which was published in the Preussische Jahrbuch ["Zwei Ansichten von Paris beim Meister des Heiligen Aegidius." Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen 53 (1932): 3-15]. Then I had written two articles ["Allegorie" and "Architekturbild"], also in German, for the Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte (1937), and I'd published something in Holland ["Notizen zu einem niederländischen Skizzenbuch in Berlin." Oud-Holland 50 (1933): 273-88]. So a number of articles. But I had, as you remember, also collected material on Jordaens. The Jordaens project, of course, helped me to come to America, because this man who invited me over [Clarence Y. Palitz] wanted to buy a painting by



Jordaens, and that's how we got together. But coming over to this country, of course, entailed a number of difficulties. First of all, the language.

RIKALA: You hadn't studied English?

HELD: No, in my school I had learned French, Latin, and Greek. Never any English. When I knew that I would go to America, I took some lessons, some private lessons in Germany. Even in my hometown, there was an old lady who had been a governess in England, and she taught me some English words. I had really very little. But I went to movies a lot. I sometimes sat through a movie twice in order to hear the same thing over again and get my ear accustomed to the pronunciation of words, and the second time I understood it much better than the first time because I knew the action. But I had to write out things, and I'm sure what I wrote out at the time was still full of awkward expressions and so on, but it didn't matter too much. But I was, of course, haunted all the time by the idea "What is going to happen to my book on Jordaens?" Let us now reconstruct a little what happened in these years. In 1938 I married. Marriage involves adjustments, and so on. Your young wife doesn't want you to sit all day in libraries.

RIKALA: No, of course not.

HELD: Then in 1938 our first child was born. Anna [Held Audette] was born in the summer of 1938; in fact she's going



to have a birthday pretty soon. Then I saw new things that I discovered when I went around in American museums. For instance, at the New York Historical Society, I saw a number of Flemish paintings which in my opinion were not properly interpreted or identified. I wrote an article which was published. You have all this in your papers. This one is called "Dutch and Flemish Primitives in the Historical Society of New York" [Art in America 53 (1934): 2-17]. You know, such discoveries, which I knew would require only a limited amount of work and which at the same time would make me known here a little. A book I knew would take a long time. While it might give me more standing, I had the feeling-- I had to do so much teaching, so many other things. Even financial questions had to be constantly considered. I mean, how can you make out with this, and so on. The pay was very modest, and I did other things to make a little extra money.

RIKALA: Where did you live in New York? Perhaps you can just briefly describe it.

HELD: When I lived alone, I lived in various places, one on the West Side and in the nineties, and then on Ninety-fifth Street on the East Side between Fifth Avenue and Madison [Avenue]. Ninety-third Street or Ninety-fifth Street, I forgot which one of those. In the nineties, anyhow. That is where I lived when my wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-



Pettersson Held] came over. When we were married, we moved to Canada. You remember, we got married in Canada. But when we moved back to New York, we first lived in a rented room with kitchen on 116th Street. Warren Hall was the name. It was a sort of a small hotel where you could rent a room and a kitchen. Then we moved into a house near Columbia [University] when I had my job at Barnard. We rented an apartment on 121st Street between Morningside Drive and Amsterdam Avenue. There we stayed until 1950. In 1950 I rented a Columbia apartment on Claremont Avenue, and that's where I stayed until I retired. I always lived then, from '37 to the end, in the Columbia area. There was no special problem.

RIKALA: You were talking about making ends meet and doing extra writing.

HELD: The writing question. See, then I got interested in the painting of The Polish Rider at the Frick [Collection], and I wrote that piece, which was then published in '44 ["Rembrandt's Polish Rider." Art Bulletin 26 (1944): 246-65]. You know, it was written two or three years before. It had to be checked for English. Can you give me that list because I can refresh my memory a little.

At the beginning, all the German items. Let me go back here to the Burlington Magazine. You see, these are little things that I published at the time. For instance, I found



that the museum in Chicago [Art Institute of Chicago]-- When I was in Chicago, I realized they have a portrait there of a man. I looked at it, and I recognized that the architectural setting for that portrait is the same as in the picture of the Madonna which was, I think, in a private collection in Boston. Or was it in a museum in Boston? But I got photographs, and I realized that they belong together. It's a diptych which had been separated, and no one had realized that. "A Diptych by Memling." It was a note in the Burlington Magazine [68 (1936): 176-79]. It's only three pages. But, you see, I made such little discoveries, you might say, observations, and they helped me to get my name into scholarly magazines. I had had something in the Burlington before. No. That's not the right page. I had a short note in Burlington Magazine. The very first one, at the top-- "Burgkmair and Lucas van Leyden" [Burlington Magazine, 60 (1932): 308-13]. So this was then the second.

Then came something for the Germanic Museum Bulletin. They had bought a whole set of the Fliegende Blätter, which is a German humoristic magazine, humorous magazine. The man who ran the museum said, "Would you write us a piece on the illustrations?" So I did that. ["The Illustrations of the Fliegende Blätter." Germanic Museum Bulletin 1 (1936): 19-22]

This is another observation that I made about a so-



called Rembrandt painting. In fact, it isn't. People don't accept it as Rembrandt anymore. My observation was not whether or not it's Rembrandt, but who is the man represented in the picture, or who it is not. Then on a trip to Sweden, I found-- Remember that I had seen a drawing by Everdingen which had an inscription, "Mölndal buyten Göteborg." And I thought, "'Mölndal' means just a valley with a mill." There must be millions of valleys with mills, so I had not really paid much attention to it. It was a drawing belonging to a man whom I had met in New York, by Everdingen. I stored it in the back of my mind that there was this inscription. Well, when I was in Göteborg and I had a few hours to spare between what was my boat or my train or whatever it was--probably a train flight or plane flight--I asked people whether there are nice places around Göteborg that I could go to. And they said, "Well, there's a nice town that's called Mölndal outside Göteborg." I said, "Mölndal, that's a place?" I went there, and there was really a waterfall in the center of town, and I could identify then that Everdingen must have been in Göteborg, because he drew that waterfall in Mölndal. That was then published in a Swedish periodical, "A Contribution to Our Knowledge of Everdingen's Scandinavian Trip" ["Ett bidrag till Kändedomen om Everdingens skandinaviska resa."]

Konsthistorisk Tidskrift 6 (1937): 41-43], that he must have



been in Göteborg.

These are all occasional things. I discovered something. Some things came together, and I wrote a piece. Of course, these were the things that I could do with all my other obligations, with all my teaching and so on. But sitting down to write a long thing or a book-- The time was just too broken up.

RIKALA: Well, and hectic. You were very hectic.

HELD: On top of that, of course--and maybe you can say you brought it on yourself, you didn't have to do it--I also kept an eye open for cheap little things to buy, because I wanted to collect.

RIKALA: That was a conscious decision to start collecting?

HELD: Oh, yes. I realized at that time that you could buy beautiful things very, very cheaply in New York. I thought, "I have no money, but I love to have works of art." And "Pim"--you know, Pim is my wife--shared that same interest. So I did go to some of these auctions. I was able to buy things for \$10 and \$15, and so on, that turned out later to be much better and more valuable. But I didn't buy these things to speculate in art. I just wanted to have works of art myself.

RIKALA: You're certainly an educated amateur collector, but you didn't collect for the sake of making a collection?

HELD: No. To be surrounded by works of art. I mean, I'd



always been, even to some extent in my parents' house--  
Because my father [Adolf Held] once came back from a  
shopping trip to Berlin and brought home about a dozen oil  
paintings which he had bought there probably quite cheaply.  
It was something unheard of in Mosbach, that someone had  
genuine oil paintings hanging on the wall. You know, most  
people had reproductions.

RIKALA: So your family did have an interest in art.

HELD: My father had some interest. I told you that he once  
bought a book for me, to stimulate my interest. I mean, he  
saw that I was interested in art, and that stimulated his  
interest in art. It hadn't come down from my grandfather or  
anything like this. I think my father got the idea only  
because I had really shown some real interest in art, so he  
thought perhaps to stimulate me to go on in art. So I  
divided up my time with domestic life-- Keeping records of  
the expenses, looking after my children, helping my wife,  
who by that time had achieved herself a position as a  
conservator at the New York Historical Society. Many times  
she asked me my advice. She said, "How should I do this?"  
So we worked together. I asked her opinion when I wanted to  
buy something, and she asked my opinion when she had to  
restore something. Sometimes she had to decide how far to  
go or what to do about it, and so on. So it was a very  
close, mutual relationship. Along with this, we also wanted



to have works of art around the house. I realized, of course, that it was a fantastic opportunity. If I had had more money, I could have made a real collection. [laughter] But that takes also a little time. I really rushed around town a lot, you know. I had, of course, a car. From 1940 on I had a car, and parking in New York at that time was not yet such a hassle, such a problem, as it is today.

RIKALA: What kind of car did you have?

HELD: I had a Chevy [Chevrolet], a secondhand Chevy that I bought-- You see, I needed it for the farm. We bought a farm in 1940. We never could have gone to our farm in the summer without a car. So I had to learn to drive, and when I learned, when I knew how to drive, I kept the car in New York. For a long time you could keep it overnight on the street. Later on, I even could do it like many other people did, that you move it from one side of the street to the other. I recently read a piece about that, a very funny piece. But then later on, much later, when the town clamped down on this kind of scheme, that you just move it from one side to the other at certain hours, then I rented a garage. I put it in a rented garage near 125th Street. So I had a car there.

There must have been an article on Jordaens. You see, in 1949, that seems to be the first one on Jordaens. The Jordaens project was-- What do you call it?



RIKALA: It was on the back burner.

HELD: The back burner. I put it on the back burner for a while. And then in 1946, the Commission for Belgian Culture in America got in touch with me and said, "Would you be willing to write a catalog of all the Rubens paintings that are in America, Rubens paintings and drawings?" That indeed was a book that then came out.

RIKALA: In '47 it comes out.

HELD: Rubens in America. So it was really done in '46. It took me about a year to prepare that. That was a man, Jan-Albert Goris, who was Belgian commissioner for cultural contacts with America. Wonderful man. A man of great intelligence. And later he became very well known as a Flemish author, Flemish literature. He wrote novels. Brilliant man.

RIKALA: How was that book received?

HELD: Relatively well. I did only the catalog part of the book, and he wrote an introduction about the reception of Rubens, or the lack of reception of Rubens, in America. The point was that Rubens was really not appreciated.

RIKALA: Neglected, exactly.

HELD: Was very much neglected, and this was his point. Well, looking now back with a better knowledge of Rubens than I had at that time, not everything is correct that's in that book. But by and large, it was for me a useful



exercise. It was quoted and people used it and so on. It helped, because it was then the first book that had my name. I mean, there was a long period-- You see, I would say from the point [of view] of a scholar, those were rather dry years. They were wonderful years because I was happily married and had children, and so on. Those were wonderful years in that respect, but from the scholarly point of view, it was all occasional work. I didn't undertake a major project of any kind. There were some longer articles and some shorter ones. The one on The Polish Rider was a long article. Well, I will have to go through this list.

"Jordaen's Portraits of His Family," when was that written? "Jordaen's Portraits of His Family." The Art Bulletin [22 (1940): 70-82]. Well, there you have one. The Jordaens piece. I was looking for that and couldn't find it before. But it was written in 1940, and that was a major article.

RIKALA: So you were very, very busy during these years.

HELD: That one really was rather basic for something that then later became very common knowledge, and most people weren't aware that I was the first one that had pointed it out. I was able to identify all the figures in a family portrait of Jordaens. The painting is in the Hermitage in Leningrad. Because before that, the people had been completely wrongly identified or it was only guesswork. But I was able to do that by demonstrating that three angels,



three little angels, were flying overhead. The people were sitting around the table, but there were three little angels. Many people had thought about it, thought it must be religious, with angels. But I found out that those are the souls of departed children. Families at the time had many children who died in childhood, and they were included in the form of little angels that still hover over their heads. Some of the people in that picture look up at their sisters and brothers who are up there. Later on, this became very common. They found many more pictures in which this was really true, and it has become now a completely generally accepted thing, that if you have such pictures that there are departed brothers and sisters there, still present there in the form of little angels flying overhead.

It helps, of course, to identify the family. I found out there really had been three children that had died. We knew their names. And, of course, how do we know that they were dead? Because in that family, let's assume--I make it up right now--that there was a child Elizabeth. And then five years later, there was another girl that was also called Elizabeth. Now, you don't call two children Elizabeth. Evidently, the second Elizabeth could only be called Elizabeth because Elizabeth had died. So I knew that there were three repeats of names, which means that three children had died. That explains to me why the three angels



were there. It's just a coincidence of the number three.

So this was one of those things.

RIKALA: So your next important work was in 1959.

HELD: Let's go back again. The first book in the English language was Rubens in America, which was really mainly a catalog. Then in the fifties, as you remember-- I had outside assignments in the fifties. I had my Yale [University]--

RIKALA: And we'll come back to that.

HELD: But in the middle of the fifties, I had the idea that perhaps it would be nice to write a book on Rubens's drawings. Maybe I should have mentioned, I had always planned to write a book on Jordaens's drawings, because Jordaens's drawings, I had studied them very intensively and I had a lot of material. In 1953, I think, I had a sabbatical. I had taken my children with me and I spent one whole year in Belgium. It must have been the year '53, '54.

RIKALA: Well, it says 1954 at Yale University. Did you come back to Yale then?

HELD: It must have been '53. 'Fifty-two, '53 must have been the year, mainly '53, the year that I spent in Belgium. At that time, I met a Belgian scholar, much younger, who also had started collecting material on Jordaens's drawings. I thought it would be silly for two people to do the same thing, so I offered him to do a book on Jordaens's drawings



together with me, that we would do it, that we would pool our knowledge and resources. I must say, something rather unhappy, unfortunate happened. Well, he asked me then whether he could look at all my material, and I gave him trustingly all my photographs and things. Well, I had no reason to think that he would steal anything, and he didn't do that. Later on it turned out-- I had tried to find a publisher for that book that we were doing together, and I couldn't mobilize an American publisher. A number of years later he wrote to me that he was very much interested in publishing the book now and the Ghent, Belgium, scholarly society--he was a graduate of Ghent University--would finance this book. They would not finance it if my name would be in it, and he would then write the book alone. Now, he had received, of course, all my material, but I couldn't help that. At that time I had begun already working on Rubens's drawings and Flemish drawings in general. It was out of my hands. It was one of those great disappointments. I don't want to accuse him of anything, but I would have expected him to say that we had started together and that much of that material really had been collected by me. He didn't do that. I had discovered completely unknown Jordaens drawings in Berlin, and so when he made his entry about that thing, he wrote, "The attribution was made by Julius Held." I'd done more than



that.

RIKALA: That's unfortunate. It's always surprising to hear those kinds of stories.

HELD: I told you this now, and you have it on your tape, but I would want to make sure that maybe we go over that text. It was one of my great disappointments in my life, because he can always say, "Well, you couldn't find a publisher." Then he found one, but the publisher, which was the society for academic studies in Ghent, said only if it's a Belgian alone. They don't support a foreigner. It was one of those things. He could have frankly given me more credit in a kind of introduction.

But in the middle of the fifties, I had begun to get very much interested in Rubens's drawings. That I then followed up. I worked quite a number of years and traveled a lot, and then in '59 came my book on Rubens's drawings [Rubens: Selected Drawings], which was really a book, because there was a long section about Rubens's drawings in general. It was not just a catalog, but a study of the role of drawing in Rubens, the kinds of drawings, the techniques, and the development of the artist as a draftsman. So it was a really coherent scholarly text followed by a detailed catalog of a selection of Rubens's drawings. It was published in a nice format, two volumes, by the Phaidon Press.

RIKALA: Now, in American universities at that time, how



were students studying drawings, old master drawings? Is this book also a contribution to the study of old master drawings as a branch in art historical studies in the United States?

HELD: Well, you have to become aware of what drawings mean. Drawings were primarily the first sketches made for other works. Of course later, when I did the oil sketches, I had to face the same problem, because the oil sketch by my definition also is a kind of preparatory work. Rubens indeed quite often began with a drawing, and then he made an oil sketch before he then finally did the large piece, whatever that was. It could have been a painting, but it could have been a tapestry. It could have been even a piece of sculpture. For the first time I can say I was pleased with some of my articles. For instance, in the fifties I had written a long review of the [Rudolf] Wittkower festschrift [Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower, edited by Douglas Fraser, Howard Hibbard, and Milton Lewine]. Now, I don't know when that was written. My Flora, the goddess Flora, you know that? ["Flora, Goddess and Courtesan." In Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky, edited by Millard Meiss (1961)] That was a thing that apparently is still quoted today. Then I had written a very long review of [Erwin] Panofsky's Early Netherlandish Painting [Art Bulletin 37 (1955): 205-34].



That came out in 1955 in the Art Bulletin. That review was twenty-nine pages long in the Art Bulletin. Perhaps one of the longest reviews ever written. I was rather, if I may say, that-- I was a little worried about what Panofksy would say, because while we had been generally on very good relations, I knew that he was a little touchy when it came to criticism. Now, it didn't criticize. It was more a compte rendu. I told what the book really gave, but in a few cases I expressed questions that one could perhaps see quite a difference, where in one case I thought that iconographically I would read it differently, or something like this.

RIKALA: Do you consider Panofksy's ideas about iconography as evolving?

HELD: Well, they do. He really had such a fantastic knowledge of classical literature and also Renaissance literature, so that helped, of course, his iconographic studies. And you only have to look at his book on the Melancolia I that he did with [Fritz] Saxl [Dürers 'Melencolia I,' eine quellen- und typengeschichtliche Untersuchung] and then later again with [Raymond] Klibansky [Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art], but he did, of course, an important part of it. Now, when I had written it and sent a copy of the review to him, I was a little worried. But he



wrote a very lovely letter back, and he said, "I read your review with interest. In some cases where you criticized my thing, you may really be right. In other cases, I still stick to my guns, and there are probably situations where neither you nor I really know what happened."

RIKALA: Oh, that's nice. That's good. That's a very giving--

HELD: That's nice. Generous. So these were some of the longer pieces. Then in the sixties-- You see, it was '59. Then in the sixties "Peter" [Horst Woldemar] Janson asked me if I would write a book on the baroque, European baroque. I accepted that, but then while I was doing it-- And of course I always had this trouble that I had to do so many other things that when I thought, "My God, do I have to write really about Italian baroque painting, Spanish baroque painting, French painting?"-- These are fields where I'm not really so familiar to write something that really can stand up to criticism. I had already written the section on Italian baroque sculpture and architecture and had begun the one on Italian painting. But at that point I said to Peter, "Couldn't we invite another scholar to do these sections?" And so I suggested then Donald Posner. Don took it, and he worked much-- I never worked fast. It took a lot of time, and I always rewrote things endlessly. So Donald took it, and in '69 that book [Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century



Art: Baroque Painting, Sculpture, Architecture] came out.

Have you ever used it?

RIKALA: Yes. Yes, I used it as an undergraduate.

HELD: The whole book.

RIKALA: Yes, that book in particular.

HELD: Well, it came out just ten years later. You see, in '59 were the Rubens drawings, the first edition. The baroque book in '69. Then came '72, the volume that my students collected. Wasn't it the Rubens and His Circle? No, that was '82. There must have been something else.

There was a very special little publication. Oh, yeah. In '69-- I was all wrong. The baroque book didn't come out in '69. It was the Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and other Rembrandt Studies which came out in '69, which was a collection of older articles, but there was something that was new in it, I believe. That was '69. Then the baroque book came out in '72. And then came The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: [A Critical Catalogue] in '80. And then in '82-- That's not listed here. In '82 came Rubens and His Circle: [Studies by Julius S. Held].

RIKALA: That's '82.

HELD: 'Eighty-two, but that's not here. Why not? Don't I have that? That's funny. [laughter]

RIKALA: Maybe it's on another page.

HELD: You see, in '80 was The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul



Rubens, but in '82-- No, it should be here on this page. You have to type it in. Well. In the space of thirty years--or almost twenty-five years--I had a number of books coming out and a number of articles also. So these were then the more productive years. In those years, again, the activity for the museum in Ponce [Museo de Arte de Ponce] took a lot of time.

RIKALA: Began around that time.

HELD: Began in the late fifties.

RIKALA: And perhaps we can talk about that next.



TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

JUNE 25, 1991

RIKALA: Let's start tonight with your visiting professorship at Yale University. You mentioned to me that George [A.] Kubler had something to do with you getting the position. Can you tell me about that?

HELD: George invited me to come over because the university-- They had found or had been given--I'm not quite sure now--a large collection of drawings, old master drawings. It's called the Egmont Collection. He thought it might be a nice topic for a seminar to discuss this material, which had not really much been studied before. Colin Eisler had written an article about it before, but this was several hundred drawings, and Colin had only written about a few of them where the attributions were very simple and they were rather interesting but easily identifiable drawings. Kubler thought maybe it would be interesting for students to learn to look at these things under the guidance of someone who had worked on drawings for a long time. And so it was. I, of course, commuted from New York to New Haven, because I had my New York program all along, too.

RIKALA: Oh, my goodness.

HELD: That was not like some of the others were when I lived in the place, but this was purely a commuting



situation. I continued teaching my three courses in New York.

RIKALA: And was it a graduate course at Yale?

HELD: At Yale? Only graduate students.

RIKALA: So they were a seminar.

HELD: But I was also invited to teach a lecture course. Or was it a seminar, maybe, a Rubens seminar? That was separate from the Egmont Collection. The Egmont Collection was just a seminar about drawings, where we constantly looked at the drawings themselves, and the students wrote then short papers. But the Rubens was a more conventional kind of seminar. I had in there quite a number of students. It was almost, you might say, on a postgraduate level, because there were some students-- We mentioned Hoag.

RIKALA: John Hoag.

HELD: He attended that Rubens seminar. He told me recently, when I gave the lecture out in Boulder [Colorado]-- [Robert L.] Herbert was in there, the man who wrote a book on impressionists. He was then a professor at Yale himself. Now, he wrote on one of the great impressionists. I'm sorry that I'm a little vague on that at the moment. The youngest member was a man who later was for a while director of the Fogg [Art] Museum at Harvard [University], and again I can't at this moment think of his name, but he retired from that job. There was some



unpleasantness, and I don't remember what it was, but he left that job and later on he lived in Vermont somewhere. I have really lost contact with him. But he was the youngest student in that particular group. There were not many. There were about half a dozen students in that Rubens seminar. But, as I said, it was strictly a commuting position. I never stayed overnight in New Haven. My daughter wasn't married there yet. She now lives in New Haven, and of course now I would stay with her. But that was in the early fifties, and she was not even in college yet, or maybe just. So that was New Haven. I don't think there's much more to say.

RIKALA: Well, how did you find the department there? Do you remember any comparisons?

HELD: I had very little contact with others. You see, I went over there and did my work and then traveled back. I never had very close-- Well, with Kubler, of course, who had invited me. I saw him. We had a very nice personal relationship always. But there were other professors there whom I hardly knew. I never took part in any departmental discussions or anything like this. I was strictly an outsider.

RIKALA: For the other course you taught, on the Egmont Collection, were the students memorable in any distinct way?

HELD: Well, it's a long time ago, you know. It was '54, and that's about thirty-seven years ago. I do remember one



student who later made a name for himself, but I would have to look that up. Student names are sometimes rather hard to remember because there were so many of them. If I saw the name, I would immediately know. I think there were two or three students in that seminar whose names I found later again in some publications.

RIKALA: Who remained in art history.

HELD: Yes, and became professors themselves. Well, anyone who was a graduate student at Yale would be rather unusual if he wouldn't land somewhere in a decent job.

RIKALA: That's true. Later then, about ten years later, you get the [Robert Sterling] Clark Professorship of Art at Williams [College].

HELD: In the sixties.

RIKALA: 'Sixty-nine and '74, it says, at Williams College.

HELD: Well, I was invited to be Clark Professor while I was still in New York. Is it really '69? I would have almost thought it was '68. Well, it probably was. It's okay, maybe we can verify that in Williamstown [Massachusetts].

RIKALA: Yes, we can check that too.

HELD: First of all, I lived in Williamstown then. I went only home for weekends, you know. I rented a room. My wife was still in New York, and by that time, '68 or '69, the children were already out elsewhere in professions. So I rented an apartment almost on the grounds of the college and



lived there for five days, and then for the weekend I would go to New York. I think at that time I still drove the distance. I would drive home. Or it could well be that my wife came up and we spent the weekend on the farm if the weather-- It's also possible. Some of these things are hard to remember if you don't really take notes all the time. There I gave one graduate course and two undergraduate courses. You see, that was during the time when I must have had a leave of absence or something or a sabbatical, because I know I couldn't carry my job in New York along with this. Because this was a full teaching job, and I think they also expected a public lecture. That usually goes with that kind of invitation, that you must give at least one public lecture. There was one seminar and either one or two lecture courses.

The interesting thing is-- And I'm not sure now whether this was the first time or the second time. It may have been the second time. Williams College was an all-male college, you know that. Then just around that time when I was there, either in '69 or in '74, they opened it up for women. The first group of women that came to study there, undergraduate students, they came over from Vassar [College]. They were enrolled in Vassar, but they took courses at Williams. So it was quite obvious that every girl that was in my class was a Vassar girl. They didn't



come from anywhere else. It was rather exciting for the boys, also. Suddenly they have coeducational classes, which of course before they didn't have. Well, the first time, as I said, in '69, I commuted from New York. But in 1970, I moved to Bennington [College]. So the second appointment to Clark Professor was of course when I left here, and so then I just commuted from here to my classes. I think that Vassar, that invasion of the Vassar students, was at my second holding of the Clark Professorship.

RIKALA: In the seventies.

HELD: There I remember I gave, for instance, a course on German medieval art, which I had of course given also occasionally in New York, you know. I did not only teach Flemish and Dutch. One undergraduate course at Williams College was a course on German thirteenth- and fourteenth-century architecture and sculpture, mainly, perhaps even sculpture. Wait a minute, it might have been a course on German art. No, I'm all wrong. It was German art from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. So I began with the great sculptors of the High Middle Ages, through the late Gothic, and I ended probably with Dürer and Grünewald and Holbein and Altdorfer and that group of artists. It's a little funny for me to say this now when I'm a German refugee--I was deeply attached to German art. Even my choice of Dürer as a main topic had something to do with it.



I had taken courses in medieval art, and I was very much attached to it and liked to teach about that too.

If I remember something unusual-- Because normally Clark Professors, it's very rare that they come back, that they are asked back, so it was a little exceptional that I was asked to come again to be a Clark Professor. But I think that broke the ice, because then after '74, they asked me whether I would not continue teaching. Then I taught for-- I don't even know how many years. Ten years or something? Do you have that? I taught then a course each term.

RIKALA: From '77 to '81? That doesn't quite look correct.

HELD: I think there's something I ought to find out at Williams College, how long I really was Clark Professor. 'Sixty-nine and '74. Visiting professor here [at Williams College] '73 to '82.

RIKALA: One of the things that's very interesting about Williams College is that many of the important museum directors were students there, people who are now directors.

HELD: Who?

RIKALA: Well, wasn't John Walsh [Jr.] there at that time?

HELD: At Williams? No.

RIKALA: Was he? No.

HELD: John once was my student at Columbia [University].



RIKALA: Columbia. Oh, I'm sorry, I got that wrong.

HELD: No, John Walsh was never at Williams. But--

RIKALA: "Rusty" [Earl A.] Powell [III], who is the director of L.A. County Museum [of Art], I believe was a--

HELD: Well, the director of painting and sculpture of the Museum of Modern Art, the current director [Kirk Varnedoe] was a Williams student. But you are right. There are also very prominent art dealers, people who became very prominent art dealers. One of them, [David] Tunick-- Do you know him by name? Tunick? He is a very successful dealer in New York, and he's a graduate of Williams College. That had something to do with one of the professors there. Really I would have to go and pull out my Williams catalog, because I should have these names at the tip of my tongue.

RIKALA: We can come back to that.

HELD: There was one professor who really taught a museum course.

RIKALA: Well, that's what I was wondering, if-- As though directorship was a career path in the modern museum.

HELD: In that graduate program, they always gave a course on museum training. That was a strong tradition there. Of course I didn't teach museum training, although I had some myself originally. Many of them [students in museum courses] landed in museum positions, not yet directors but curators, print curators and that kind of thing.



RIKALA: I was just wondering if at any point there's a certain consciousness of the business side of running a museum as well as the collecting side of running a museum.

HELD: Administrative problems were probably not really taught in those courses. They had to learn something about conservation and purchases and deaccessioning, whether or not one should do it, and so on. Hanging. There are all sorts of problems. I have never taught such a course, and I don't know really what went on in these courses, but it's easy to imagine what one would want to learn in such a course.

I sat in on a seminar in Vienna of [Julius von] Schlosser. It was also museum training. That was a course he loved to give. I remember that there are always certain things that you never forget that seem to be minor things. At the first meeting, he talked in front of some people and he said, "Well, if you are a curator of a collection, what is the first thing you must do? Well, what would you do? The first thing that you must do is give each item a number. That's the way you have to begin." I thought it was very clever. It was, of course, logical. Because you have to give them a number and then you say, "From here on we go on." Then you describe it and so on, and you always know that number seventy-three is really this particular piece.

So these are contents of museum courses. But I never



taught any. Michael Rinehart, the librarian, did teach a museum course there as long as he did teach. But you know he's with RILA [International Repertory of the Literature of Art]. He's the head man--was--of RILA and is now still in charge of the new program. Michael Rinehart. We have been friends for a long time, Michael Rinehart and I.

So the second one was not quite the same thing as the professorship that took me away from where I lived. The Clark Professorship began with very distinguished people, and I can't help saying that perhaps lately they have run out of prominent people and invited sometimes people who were good but maybe didn't have that kind of prestige. But, you know, [John] Pope-Hennessy was once a Clark Professor in the beginning. And of course George [Heard] Hamilton was Clark Professor. There are quite a number of others who were really distinguished people. Later on there came people who were perfectly good scholars in their own field, but were perhaps a little-- I mean, there were good ones, but somehow the great names-- Well, whom would you invite today? Who are the great names?

RIKALA: Who are the great names? Well, that's a very good question.

HELD: It's a question. I'm sure they invited, for instance, Leo Steinberg. But Leo Steinberg, who is of course a brilliant scholar-- We have been friends also, even



though we had at one time a little-- He's a real prima donna, and he was once a little hurt by a mild, mild question that I had. Leo Steinberg, they haven't got the money to pay him. You see, the Clark Professorship is not heavily endowed. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that it's harder to get some really outstanding scholars, because they don't want to spend a whole term somewhere where they get half of what they get where they are, or something like this. Okay. What else? I taught at other places too.

RIKALA: Yes, we could--

HELD: Then I was at [University of] Pittsburgh at one time.

RIKALA: That was in the early seventies as well, the time in between. It was an Andrew Mellon Professorship.

HELD: Andrew Mellon Professorship in Pittsburgh. Yes, I lived there for, I think, one term, and of course I lived away from home. My wife lived already here. I did come home again for weekends, maybe not every weekend, but at least every second one. I had to fly from Albany to Pittsburgh and come back, commute by plane. That was very nice.

RIKALA: Was that a graduate course?

HELD: Well, it was both seminar-- Seminars were quite small. I remember that the average of my seminars-- There must have been two seminars. There were about six students. So it was very close, very intimate, and quite nice. Then



there were lecture courses. I had to give a public lecture. I should perhaps have gone through the records more carefully. At the moment I'm even a little unsure whether it was one term or two terms.

RIKALA: This says 1972 through '73.

HELD: That could have been a winter term. It could have been a winter term and so on. I know how I could determine it, by going through my old money accounts and seeing whether I got paid by Pittsburgh over a longer period.

RIKALA: We can come back to that if it's important.

HELD: We can come back. I can look it up.

RIKALA: I asked you previously what were your recollections of World War II here in the United States, and you said, in addition to that, you had very strong memories of the uprising in '68 and '69. Could you tell me a little bit about that. Were there disruptions on campus that you remember?

HELD: Oh, yes, yes. You see, we were torn-- The faculty-- I'm speaking now for me as a faculty member--

RIKALA: At Columbia. At Barnard and Columbia.

HELD: Both. I mean, they all worked together, although the more forceful protest actors were Columbia students. The Barnard girls went along to some extent, but were not quite as violent or determined as some of the Columbia students. You know, they occupied buildings. One man, one scholar,



lost practically his lifework because they set fire to his study. As I said, we were torn, because on the one hand we sympathized with the restlessness of the students. The Vietnam War had been dragging on, and we felt it was an unjust war and destroyed social cohesion. There seemed to be no way out. The students, of course, rebelled against the linkup of the university administrations and big money interests--weapon manufacturers and so on. But on the other hand, we felt very strongly that the students attacked the wrong target. I mean, they practically brought the university to a standstill when they really should have marched to Washington. So of course we also couldn't condone what the students were doing. But you may know that there were strong sympathizers within the faculty. There were quite a few younger people who really made common cause with the students.

RIKALA: What was that generation of faculty?

HELD: Those were the people in their thirties, usually. Many of them had not been promoted to full-time professorships and so on. And there were radical people. I saw on TV recently a woman who was then one of the big radical leaders at Barnard who is now a lady in her sixties and is a professor somewhere, back in Virginia somewhere. Anyhow. She took part in a discussion on TV, and I thought, "So that is the way she looks now." I remember her. She



was one of the most outspoken junior faculty members at Barnard. There was Kate Millett. Does that name mean anything to you, Kate Millett? She wrote a book, sort of one of the first violent feminist protest books [Sexual Politics], Kate Millett. She was at Barnard.

On the eighth floor of Schermerhorn [Hall], where our offices were, one of our own graduate students strutted around us as if he owned the place, as if we professors really had nothing to say, the students are taking over. This man later became a member of the establishment. He became a curator at the Cloisters. He was director in the Brooklyn Museum, and then he was for a while director in Washington of the Corcoran Museum. I mean, he sort of climbed very quickly up the ladder in a perfectly traditional and conventional way. But at that moment he was sort of the great man and we were just dirt under his feet.

[laughter]

RIKALA: That's quite extraordinary.

HELD: I never forget that. Then there was a moment which, in retrospect, is almost a little funny. The Columbia students-- Oh, I must show you something. Remind me of it, I have something to show. The Columbia students boycotted-- They lined up in front of the Barnard buildings, too, and wouldn't let people go through.

RIKALA: They made a picket line.

HELD: A picket line. Picketing. Columbia students were



picketing the Barnard buildings. And some Barnard girls were with them probably, but it was really boys. You know, this went on for quite a while. One of those days I wanted to go to my office and there were these phalanx of boys and they stood together. I just pushed them aside. They pushed back a little, but I said, "You can't keep me from going to my office." I did go in, and I went up. I worked there. I did some reading or whatever, I don't know, for several hours. It was nice and quiet. I must have heard some bells ringing, but I didn't pay any attention because they were the class bells. I was used to this kind of bell ringing, and I said, "Well, the class bells just keep on ringing even though there are no classes." There were no classes that day. And around five o'clock I went out the front door. One of the Barnard guards was standing there, and he looked at me like this and said, "Where do you come from?" "Well," I said, "you know where I come from. I was in my office." "Didn't you hear the bells?" I said, "Well, I heard some bells." "Well, we had a bomb alarm. Someone called in there was a bomb in Barnard Hall, and they rang the bells to empty the building." And I paid no attention to it. Well, there was no bomb. [laughter] So that kind of thing happened too.

They damaged very badly a beautiful statue, Alma Mater, a bronze statue in front of the building. They put a bomb



there. They ripped a big hole into that. So there were serious damages. It was the time of graduation, and the administration decided not to have graduation on the open field where they normally have it, but in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. As a commencement speaker, they asked a historian-- I should know the name, but it might come to me--one of the younger but very fine historians. He made a very wonderful, under the occasion, very dignified and worthy speech. But when he began speaking, about fifty or sixty junior members of the faculty demonstratively got up and walked out. Hofstadter, Richard Hofstadter. Albert Hofstadter was the man who took over before [Rudolf] Wittkower came. You know, I said there was a man who was assigned to be the chairman? That was Albert Hofstadter. He was the brother of Richard Hofstadter. It's funny how these names come to you a few hours later. Richard Hofstadter gave the address. Of course he continued speaking, and he was very nice and very thoughtful. But the younger faculty members all walked out.

Then the university decided there were some other intelligent men in the law school who suggested that perhaps Columbia, the administration, had been too authoritarian. That was an old tradition ever since [Nicholas M.] Butler's time, that everything was run from the president down and the faculty had very little to say. And so they decided



that there should be a senate. Each department and each school should have a representative in the senate. That was done, and Barnard was given two representatives. Barnard should choose two representatives for the senate. One of them was me. I was first senator for Barnard College. I don't think I distinguished myself in any way, but I always voted, I think, with the right people.

[laughter]

RIKALA: But that's a very interesting institutional move for them to make.

HELD: They still have a senate. There were many faculty discussions, sometimes very violent ones. There were discussions about whether Columbia should sell stocks in firms who did business with South Africa or did business with other totalitarian regimes, and so on.

A great, very important role in these revolution months was played by a gym that Columbia wanted to build in Morningside Heights. Now, that is a hill, Morningside Heights, with a very steep drop down, and at the bottom is Harlem, the Negro section. They wanted to build a gym into the hillside. It could have been done very nicely; it might have been a very interesting arrangement. Columbia claimed that of course it should be open also to kids from Harlem if they wanted to use it, but our students said this is just an affront to the Harlem community that we take away their



park, or parts of their park. Because the decline was Morningside Park. Well, it always actually was perhaps the unsafest park in New York. People never walked in the park, in Morningside Park, at night because it was too risky there. Well, the gym was never built. They began work on it, but it was stopped.

There were many interesting developments, and I wouldn't remember them all. One night I remember that I walked my dog-- We had all these dogs, you know, and around eleven at night you would walk the dog. I knew that that night the students had planned a big demonstration on the main campus. During the night everyone expected trouble. We all knew something would happen. I saw one of my students, who is now, by the way, a professor in New England somewhere in a college [Margaret Deutsch Carroll]. She was still a Barnard student. I saw her going up the hill towards the Columbia campus, and I said, "Margaret, where are you going? You're not going in there to the campus?" And she said, "Well, why not?" She wanted to see what was going on. I said, "You really should stay away." But she didn't. I knew she wouldn't. She was too-- And so she went. Nothing happened to her, but the police finally went in there and roughed up some of the students. It was a bad night. I didn't like her to be involved in that, but young people-- It's just too interesting.



Now, talking about walking the dog-- I remember fondly two students of my Barnard students, both of whom were art history majors but made a success in very different ways.

One was Twyla Tharp. You know who she is?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: Well, she was an art history major at Barnard. Maybe I shouldn't say this, because it sounds very conceited when I say this, but it's true. She was a famous alumna for Barnard, and so Barnard-- They publish an alumnae bulletin, and she was interviewed for the bulletin. She was asked something about what she learned at Barnard, and what she was supposed to have said was printed: She didn't get anything out of Barnard. The only course that had meant anything to her was the art history course with Julius Held. I was in touch with her; I have some letters from her, too. She became very famous, and I've never seen her dance or her group-- No, only on TV I've seen her group. Then another who I met one evening when I walked my dog was-- She's a performance artist, a famous performance artist. Does that ring a bell? She plays an instrument. I mean, sort of performance. You know, what they call performance art.

RIKALA: Her name will come.

HELD: I have a little correspondence with her. I'm sure when you hear the name you will remember it. [Laurie Anderson] So have I had any other students at Barnard who



then made--? Well, Barbie [Barbara] Novak has become quite well known as an author of American art.

RIKALA: Yes, she's a very important art historian.

HELD: Then you may know Sandra [Alessandra] Comini, who has written a lot about the Austrian artists, [Egon] Schiele and [Gustav] Klimt and these people. She teaches in Texas somewhere. So some of these Barnard students did make a good career, and I'm sure I should remember a few others.

Well, at Columbia-- I've mentioned only some names before of people who then became teachers at Columbia, but of course John Walsh then was also one of my students there. John interrupted his studies at one time. I think he had to earn some money or something. So he worked in the administration. He was an admissions officer at Columbia for a while. Then he wrote his dissertation. He really wrote it with me, but the topic was given to him in Holland. He spent quite some time in Holland, and most of the work was done in Holland. Then when he had finished his manuscript, then he came up to my farm one summer, and for three days we sat together in my barn, which I have converted into a study, and went over the dissertation with a fine comb, sort of like an editorial activity. Then it was accepted, and he graduated with some honors, I presume. I'm sure he got some honors with his-- Magna cum, summa cum, I don't remember. So I always enjoyed his company and we



had contact. You know for a while he was in New York at the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. Then he was curator in the Boston museum [Museum of Fine Arts]. He left the New York museum, the Metropolitan Museum, in protest together with the curator under whom he worked, because of some political thing, exhibition, that they couldn't approve or something. Boston took him, and then he was plucked out as the director of the [J. Paul] Getty Museum.

There was something that came to my mind. When I mentioned the barn where I worked with him on his dissertation, or looking over his dissertation-- (I mean, he had worked on it; I had not done anything before that.) It was really a part of a barn that originally was a cow stable. But I put in a new floor and some new windows, and that was where I worked. And part of my work for an article which later had a certain effect, an interesting effect, was written in that converted cow stable. The article that I refer to is one that I published in Burlington [Magazine], and it was called something like "The Installation of Rubens's Ceiling in the Banqueting House of Whitehall" ["Rubens's Glynde Sketch and the Installation of the Whitehall Ceiling." Burlington Magazine 112 (1970): 274-81]. Rubens painted nine panels, canvases really, to decorate the ceiling of the Banqueting House of Whitehall. Through some studies that I had done in connection with my



book on Rubens's oil sketches, I had come to the conclusion that the way they were hanging on the ceiling was not the right way. They had to be reassembled in a different way.



TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

JUNE 25, 1991

RIKALA: You were in the barn, at your farm--

HELD: I had come to the conclusion that the canvases that were hanging on the ceiling of the Banqueting House in London at Whitehall were installed wrongly, that at least some of them had to be exchanged. It had to be turned around. Not exchanged so much as turned around. It has something to do with the perspective under which they were seen, you know. Rubens painted all these figures in foreshortening on the ceiling. You should see the foreshortening, so that you have the impression that they're really there. When you were in that room, it never looked right. Something was wrong. Through the analysis of one of the sketches that he made for that ceiling, I came to the conclusion-- I don't want to bore you with the details and it will take too long. Anyhow, I came to the conclusion that they were installed wrongly. Now, that doesn't mean that they were installed wrongly in the seventeenth century. I'm sure they were installed correctly at the time, but we know from records that maybe three times those pictures were taken down and were cleaned and then were put back again. At one time, they were put back in the wrong way. The reason why they put them back the wrong way was that they followed an engraving which a man in the eighteenth century



[Simon Gribelin] had made of the ceiling. He had, of course, lined up the pictures for engraving, and the engraving is not larger than a large sheet of paper, so they're all looking the same way. I mean, there are nine pictures, but the most important ones are three very large pictures in the center. They've been foreshortened, and in the print the foreshortening is always the same way, as if you would pick them up and put them there, and they all look in the same direction. But through the analysis of that sketch and through the studying of the tradition of ceiling paintings, especially in Venice, it was easy to demonstrate that only two of these paintings had to look in one direction, and another one had been turned around to look in another direction. Then some other things had to be exchanged. This I did while I was sitting in that converted cow stable on the farm in Vermont, in Marlboro in Vermont, rearranging the paintings of the ceiling of the Banqueting House in London. The irony of the thing is that you are thousands of miles away in an environment that has nothing to do with the grandiosity of the room.

I wrote that piece ["Rubens's Glynde Sketch and the Installation of the Whitehall Ceiling"], and it was published in the Burlington Magazine [112 (1970): 274-81]. It was the lead article in the Burlington Magazine in a certain issue. Then of course people said, "Oh, the office



of the crown will never do anything." You see, it belongs to the crown. It's not the city of London or anything. I know the name of the office, Ministry of Works. The Ministry of Works is responsible for that kind of thing, and people told me, "It's absolutely right, it's completely convincing, but the Ministry of Works won't do a thing." Well, three years later they did it. They [the canvases] have been rehung. I remember several years later I went to look at the hall, and I came in and-- They charge a shilling or half a crown or something at entry. It was not expensive. Then I said, "You know that the pictures have been rehung up there, haven't they?" She said, "Oh, yes, an American scholar has written something about it and we have them rehung." [laughter] So I said, "It's me who wrote it." She said, "It's you? Here is your money." [laughter]

RIKALA: Really, then she gave back your money.

HELD: She gave me whatever I'd paid for the entrance. Then she said, "Would you like a cup of tea?" She gave me a cup of tea. When I talk about that room [in the barn] I always remember that that is where I rehung the Rubens pictures in Whitehall.

RIKALA: Isn't imagination wonderful, that you can be in your barn and sit there and rearrange the ceiling panels.

HELD: It wasn't easy to work that out, and I only did it at



one moment, when I took that sketch. I told you there was a sketch which gave me the clue, but looking at the sketch I only was puzzled that some parts of the sketch were painted in one way and the other in the other direction. I couldn't understand it. Then at one moment I said, "Well, a sketch. He must have thought about what the sketch looks like on the ceiling, the picture of the ceiling." So I took the sketch and held it up over myself. Then suddenly I realized. It gave me the real clue.

I mentioned today before that the little place of the synagogue at Mosbach, that little minipark which they made, that that is one of the lasting things. I think the installation of the ceiling at Whitehall is the other thing that I think will last. Otherwise, whatever I've written may be useful or-- The thing which I've written not so long ago and which will be published in the Art Bulletin probably by the end of this year or the next year is also, in a way-- A minor contribution but still something that will have an effect in a completely different area, not in art history, but for Dutch history, Dutch literature, and also to some extent Dutch music. And I might talk about that tomorrow, so I think I'm not going to talk about that.



SECOND PART

JUNE 26, 1991

HELD: In that list of NYU [New York University] refugee scholars we should put [Richard] Krautheimer's name down also.

RIKALA: What was the impact of his arrival?

HELD: Krautheimer's? As I told you, he was first at another institution. He was at Vassar College for a while. What the impact was: Well, he was very forceful. He has a very forceful personality and had an interesting way of teaching, of speaking. He came from southern Germany somewhere, and there is a certain way of putting in an unnecessary word just routinely. The way you hear people often say, "you know, you know, you know, you know." And so there's a word that he used all the time. But the lectures were very forceful, very interesting. He is, of course, a really great scholar of the city of Rome. I mean, no one knows Rome better than Richard Krautheimer.

RIKALA: Let's begin today by talking about the Museo de Arte de Ponce and your relationship with the museum and your relationship as an expert.

HELD: Well, I can tell you how it began.

RIKALA: How did they contact you?

HELD: I had met Luis Ferré privately in New York twice, I believe. First in the home with some friends and then at



one time at the college, at Barnard College. He had come on the invitation of the Spanish department, and they had hoped to get some money from him. I don't know whether they ever got-- But there I met him again. Then one day he called me up. We were not very close at the time. He even began by saying, "Do you remember me?" You know, I had met him a few years before. I said, "Sure, I remember you." He said, well, he had a few days before gone to a small auction in New York--I think it was either a Savoy or a Plaza [hotel] auction. He had been carried away, he said, and he bought about twenty-six paintings in just one evening in a small auction. He had them sent to a warehouse in Queens, and would I do him a favor and go over there and just tell him what he has. Because he liked them and they were set up on the stand and he bought them and they were all quite cheap. I mean, I don't know what the total was of what he spent that evening, but surely not more than a few thousand altogether, maybe \$5,000, \$6,000. I was terribly apprehensive, because evidently he was interested in art. He mentioned that he would like to make a museum in Puerto Rico. If I now go to that warehouse and see that every single one of those paintings is trash, which was very likely, because these auctions were-- Most of them sold things that were wrongly attributed and bad quality and bad condition, and so on and so on.



Well, he always remembered what I wrote him then. It was strange enough. There were about five or six paintings which by luck were really very good. They are still part of the museum today. I wrote him a long letter and said I sorted the works, those paintings-- It was either twenty-six or twenty-seven or -eight, something like this. I made three groups. One group that I think is really quite good and would be worth it to be in a museum. The second group are dubious pictures where judgment is difficult either because they were so dirty that one could then tell only after cleaning, or they needed restoration in some way, or they might be interesting but they would have to be investigated. There are some things I could say offhand, but there are other situations where I would have to check things. So that was the second group. Then the last group was the one where I said, "You might as well discard them as quickly as possible. They are completely worthless." He was very delighted that he had something good, and then for about a year we had a very loose relationship.

He traveled at that time a good deal. Sometimes from Switzerland or from Italy he sent me photographs, pictures that were offered him, and said, "What do you think of them?" Most of the time I thought very little of them. Then about a year later, he said we should perhaps formalize our relationship. Or maybe I told him-- Because I said, "I



have other things to do. I can't do these things just as a favor." Which I had done until then. Going to that warehouse and looking at twenty-six paintings and writing a big letter, for that I charged him \$100, which was cheap enough. [laughter] Then we discussed it, and we came to some kind of an agreement: that if he would buy anything, he would pay me something for my advice. If he bought something on my advice. But that did not include all the paintings and photographs that he sent me which I told him not to buy. My expertise was involved just as much in those pictures that he didn't buy as in those that he bought, but our agreement was that I get paid only if he buys. I never quibbled in such things. I was happy to be associated with an enterprise like this that eventually will lead to a museum. You see, that was, of course, my original career. I had planned to be in a museum. So it was the end of my life-- I was over fifty. I was in my early fifties when this began. That I at that age still be given the chance of helping to build a museum-- So it was rather nice, and that's why I never quibbled very much. There were moments when I thought he cut little corners, you know. I mean, he's a wonderful man and we are very good friends all the time, but he's a businessman.

RIKALA: What was his interest in art originally? What was his background, briefly?



HELD: Oh, Luis Ferré, first of all, is a member of one of the wealthiest families of Puerto Rico that made its fortune through cement. Puerto Rican Cement is the name of the firm. Cement is one of the chief building materials in Puerto Rico, not wood but cement, and that was a flourishing business. There were three brothers. The father had founded the enterprise, and then there were three sons. Luis was the only one who was really always more interested in culture, and also in charity and so on. A very intelligent man. He speaks French fluently. But in addition to all this, he was very ambitious politically. He ran three times for governor of Puerto Rico and was always beaten. Then he tried again after we had already begun our collaboration in the sixties. He ran again, and he made it. You know, he was for one term, four years, governor of Puerto Rico. That was not good for the museum. I'll explain to you in a moment. Of course, as governor he lived in the Fortaleza in San Juan. His home is Ponce, where the museum is. He still has a house there, but now he lives all the time in San Juan. Well, he lived, of course, in Fortaleza, which is the governor's residence, a kind of old castle or so. When I came-- And I came once every year, I visited. Once the museum was a running thing, once a year I had to go to see that everything was done right and what should be done, and so on. I gave him a lot of advice for



the museum.

So in the late sixties, he managed to become governor because the opposition party, which was really always the larger party--the Commonwealth Party, which had beaten him on all the previous occasions when he ran for governor--in that year split, I think in late '68 or something. His opposition party split into a moderate and conservative wing, and he slipped in between the two, you see. Certainly he was the majority, because none of the others-- So that was rather fun. When I visited, I stayed at the Fortaleza and went around there where people could only gawk at the building through a gate on the outside of it. I moved in there. So we began very soon being first name. This remained, then, throughout most of the relationship.

It went usually like this: That there were two possibilities of how he bought things. Either some dealers came to him or sent him photographs-- And then almost automatically he would send me those photographs and say, "Dealer X, Y has just offered me these paintings. What do you think?" Then I wrote him what I think.

Then he would say, for instance, "Two weeks from now the Parke-Bernet"--which was the name that today's Sotheby's was called, Parke-Bernet Galleries--"Parke-Bernet has an auction of old masters. Would you do me a favor and go there and look at it?" So naturally I would go there, and I



went through the exhibition and picked, then, one or two or three pictures that I think are worthwhile. Sometimes he would ask me, "Well, how much is it worth?" For instance, in auctions, there are estimates, you know. The auctioneer gives you an estimate. Let us assume the estimate was \$5,000. Then I would say to Luis-- If I liked the picture very much, I said, "You should be prepared to go higher than that. That seems to be low as an estimate." But he was very, very reluctant always to go even beyond the estimate of the auctioneer, and he usually hoped to get it for less than the estimate. Sometimes he did. Sometimes he did. But in a few cases, he let things go. He told me afterwards that "I should have listened to you more." He told me that many times, because some rather important pictures he let go because he was not willing to spend a little more money for them.

Then there was a third, but that was relatively rare, that he came to New York and said, "Can you spend an afternoon with me? Let's go around and look at some things with dealers." So we did that. Two rather important paintings we bought on one such visit. I can show you the picture of one of them here. This [The Flight into Egypt] is Joos van Cleve, who was a major Flemish painter of the early sixteenth century. It's not very large, but it is exquisite, in a most marvelous condition. It was sixty-



three centimeters by forty-three, so it's a nice small picture. It was a Marinus Roymerswaele [Saint Jerome] that we bought together with the van Cleve.

RIKALA: Did you actually set up the guidelines for what the museum should be and what the collection should be?

HELD: No. I had a very different-- This here [the van Cleve painting] and this [the Roymerswaele painting] we bought at the same time, and it went like this. It was a major dealer [French and Company], mainly in tapestries. They didn't deal so much with paintings, but we researched there. The lady who showed us things spoke Spanish very well, and of course that was a plus for a salesperson. She came with these two paintings. She said, "We just got them in. They just came in, and we want to show them to you." His first question was, "How much, how much?" [laughter] So she said, "I don't really know. They just came in. I have to go to the office, to the manager, and ask his opinion." So she left, providentially. I really was happy that she left, because I told Luis, "No matter what she says, you must buy these pictures. Absolutely you must buy them, because such a beautiful--" I mean, today the small one is worth half a million or more. Anyhow, so she came back and I think she said something like \$10,000 or \$12,000 for two, you know. Of course, after I had pushed him so hard, he bought them. Of course he was very happy.



Together we once went to an auction where he bought French paintings. I remember only once that we went together to an auction. That was very rare. We did go around to Julius Weitzner, who was head of the gallery in New York [Weitzner Galleries]. Julius Weitzner. Later he moved to London, and now he died quite a number of years ago. There he bought about ten or twelve pictures all in one fell swoop, so to speak. Of course I was with him, and I made sure that they all were good pictures. I don't want to go into detail. This was the way it went: If I looked at something in an auction and told him, "You should buy that," all he had to do then-- He called up the representative of Puerto Rican Cement in New York. You know, they had an office in New York, because they exported cement and so on. He told that man that he should go and he should go so far in what he should bid. I never went there. I never bid for him. It was always done by one of his men.

RIKALA: So you never had--

HELD: Because I kept myself-- You see, this is important in such situations, that you keep yourself really out of the actual transactions.

RIKALA: Yes, the money handling.

HELD: I never had anything to--

RIKALA: In a sense, there's an ethical position that you were taking as an expert.



HELD: What is it?

RIKALA: You were taking an ethical position as an expert that your knowledge was valuable, but nothing more than just-- You weren't the handler.

HELD: Throughout my life I have stuck to the principle that you have to keep your hands clean. I mean, you can't do that. I remember that when I was in Europe once, in London, there was a sale at I think it was Sotheby's. And I cabled him. There was a van Dyck, and there was-- What was the other one? A very fine Flemish painting. He bought those. These are single events that I remember, you know, like the one in London at Sotheby's. It never repeated itself. Most of the purchases were made from-- Well, I should say one thing. There was one dealer in New York-- The name was Klein, Oskar Klein, and he had a son who is still alive. Oskar Klein died a few years ago. Johnny, or John Klein, is still running the business, but on a very modest scale. Well, Central Picture Galleries turned out to be one of the major contributors to the museum, that is contributors in the sense that they had all these pictures that I thought were worth having. They were very, very moderate in their prices. Luis was always very smart. I mean, I like the man, but of course I realize that if he could get something a little cheaper-- He tried everything. I mean, this is [his] right, you know, to bargain.



RIKALA: Well, and some people have an inclination.

HELD: Natural. By nature, they must bargain. The Kleins were so happy to sell to Luis, to sell to a museum. They were small considering the scale of dealing in New York--the Central Picture place was always a very small enterprise--but they were tickled to death to be able to sell, and so they were very generous in their conditions. He always bargained them down. Always. I don't think he ever paid anything that they asked for. Then he gave them not a check or whatever, but he gave them a paper that he would pay within a half a year or so. I don't know what it is called in English, this arrangement. So he always owed them money, but they knew that they would get it in the end. As I said, they were very proud, and in a way he returned it to them. First of all, he always came back. Many of the paintings came from them, and if I go through the catalog, I would still pick them. In the museum in Ponce now, there is one room-- There are seven upstairs. Have you ever seen a picture of it?

RIKALA: No.

HELD: There is a picture somewhere. I'll show it to you. On the upper level there are seven octagonal rooms, and one of the rooms is called the Oskar Klein Room. So he did recognize that this man had helped him for a relatively small amount. Here, this is a picture. This is the



picture. And, you see, there's a lower level and an upper level. On the upper level, there are seven-- Today there are palm trees in front of it. You wouldn't get a photograph that decent today, because at that time it had just been built. There are seven hexagonal rooms. There is one in the center and then three on either side. I think the second to last one or the last one on this side is the Oskar Klein Room. Now there's also a Julius Held Room there.

RIKALA: Well, what makes a good little gallery? What was special about Oskar Klein? Did he have a good eye or good connections or--?

HELD: You see, that brings me back to a question that you put to me before, but which I didn't answer because I had other things to say. You asked me whether I had a kind of philosophy of what a museum should be, a plan. I told him, Luis, from the beginning that we cannot proceed that way. You cannot say we want to be a museum of this kind of thing or this particular school or this kind of subject matter or something. If we want to make a museum, we have to be catholic in our taste, looking only for quality, not for big names, leaving out anything that was so fashionable that the prices were way beyond what we could afford. Because Luis is a very wealthy man by my standards and by your standards, I presume, but he is not wealthy compared with Rockefeller



or Norton Simon or any of these people. So I knew from the beginning that he was limited. I said, "Luis, you can't make a museum if you only want to buy French impressionists or only Greek sculpture, whatever. It can't be done. We have to buy it as the opportunity arises. We want to be a museum that gives many different things to many different people."

We have a room that's mainly Spanish art, because in Puerto Rico that is quite essential. We have, of course, a good section on Flemish and Dutch because that is where I have my special expertise. But I think I have a pretty good eye for quality also in other areas. For instance, I pushed him very hard where the opportunity arose to buy American things. Do you know the landscape painter Church? Well, we bought a very important painting by Church for \$3,000, because I told him-- He had never heard the name. In fact, many of the artists that he has now he had never heard the name before, but he learned. I mean, Luis was a fast learner. Now sometimes he tells other people something about art. That Church was with a New York dealer. He had two paintings, both that I liked very much, the Church especially, so he bought that. And then he bought a Dutch painting by Otto von Staadt.

We also bought occasionally things that had no name. I told Luis, "This is a very good picture. We have to study



that, but by the time we study that it may be sold to somebody else. Buy it, and then we'll go to work and see what it might be." I also realized that even some pictures where I accepted the current attribution, that they might eventually have to be renamed because some evidence comes up that makes us think that it has-- That happened, for instance, with one of the paintings that we bought with Weitzner. Weitzner called it Vignalli, who is a seventeenth-century Italian Florentine painter. I looked at Vignalli pictures, and it seemed to be all right. But now Italian specialists have come up with an actual even better name. I would have to look where the picture is to find the name, but-- So we had to rechristen quite a number of pictures.

But in all these years--and we bought hundreds and hundreds of pictures--I can safely say we never got a fake. We never got a copy or a school piece, unless there was a reason for us to buy it as a copy, which, for instance, in one case there was. I told him very emphatically that he should buy the picture that I'll show you here in a moment. Well, I want to say a few remarks about the collection in a moment. Here, this is a Dürer painting, but it's not by Dürer. This is by the so-called Vignalli. There it's still reproduced as Vignalli. There are two things that I must tell you. I want to show to you here-- This is the



painting. This is a contemporary repetition of a famous portrait by Dürer of the Emperor Maximilian. The original of this is in Vienna. You see, the whole thing was ridiculous. Seventeen hundred dollars. It's a sixteenth-century copy by a very fine painter. Of course, we don't know who painted it, but I said to him, "You'll never, never be able to buy a Dürer, but let's buy at least this picture, which is a contemporary copy by a first-rate painter, and have that, with even the inscription as beautiful as the original in the Viennese picture." So occasionally I told him that, you see.

Now, we have a very fine collection of English Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The first group that we bought were three paintings illustrating the so-called Briar Rose, the story of Briar Rose. There again, the three paintings together were something like \$8,000 or \$9,000, and even ten years ago they were estimated at \$300,000. Today they're worth even more. The Pre-Raphaelites, at that time they were out of fashion. You know, it happened ten years later, suddenly they became in fashion. I can tell you when they were bought. That is Burne-Jones; the Briar Rose is Burne-Jones. Later we bought some other Burne-Jones. This is the part with three paintings: the Briar Rose, the prince enters the wood, and the king and his court. They were bought in '59. The whole thing began in '57 or '58, so in



'59 I told him, "Buy the Burne-Jones." Because I knew that these were major artists, but they were completely out of fashion.

RIKALA: And someone like the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] wasn't interested? You weren't competing with the--?

HELD: No, absolutely not. It was a New York dealer where we saw them, and he was delighted to sell these pictures for good money to Puerto Rico. No, you see, today it is probably the best--or surely if not the best, then the second-best--collection of English Pre-Raphaelite paintings on this side of the ocean. The very first purchase of the Burne-Joneses I pushed very hard with that dealer.

It is also very strong on Italian baroque painting. There in that connection I have to mention another man. There was a collector in New York, his name was Paul Ganz. Ganz had been a student of [Rudolf] Wittkower's, by the way. He was quite wealthy, but he went around-- He looked a little as if you really could give him a handout to buy himself clean dress or something. [laughter] But he had lots of money. Paul Ganz, as a student of Wittkower, was very much interested in Italian baroque painting, and he constantly bought-- There must have been a time when he must have had fifty or a hundred such paintings. Then at one time he decided he wanted to sell some. He spent quite often time in Puerto Rico, and he had taken up a certain



acquaintance or even friendship with Don Luis. And Luis said, "Paul apparently is willing to sell pictures. Why don't you go and see whether we could buy anything from him?" Over a period of time, we bought quite a number of fine paintings from Paul Ganz.

Again, one of the paintings I am rather proud of because I pushed it very, very hard. I normally did not do it, but I knew Paul Ganz well, so I could talk to him quite freely, and I even bargained with him, which I never did, but in that case I wanted a picture so badly for Puerto Rico. This is by Floris, Allegory of War and Peace. It was bought in '62. So it was also bought quite early. I don't know what Paul had asked, but I told him, "Look here, this is not the kind of picture that is easy to sell, and you're a friend of Don Luis. Why don't you let it go at a reasonable price?" And so, for the sake of the museum in Ponce, because I wanted it so badly--I knew it was a very important picture--I think it was bargained down to \$6,000. I have the prices of some of them here. Well, years later a Belgian scholar wrote a book on Floris and interpreted-- I knew more or less what it represented, but not in detail. And he interpreted it beautifully. It's a very important political allegory of the sixteenth century. Well, let me see what we paid. I think, in many cases, I wrote in the margin what we paid. There was one more painting; I think



then we should perhaps stop. My memory was right. Six thousand dollars. You see, when you go through the value of \$2,200, \$2,800, and so on-- A Decamps, a French painting, a very lovely painting by Decamps for \$600. Daubigny, \$775.

RIKALA: That's amazing. Those numbers seem almost unrealistic today.

HELD: Now, I want to mention one more painting which again I saw at Parke-Bernet. I saw that and I called up Luis and said, "You must buy that." I really had not heard the name before--neither had he--but it was so beautiful. It was an American painter, Ulrich. Have you ever heard of him? Charles Ulrich? I mentioned American art. We have quite a number of American paintings. I can mention them to you in a moment. But this Ulrich painting [The Glassblowers]--I wrote an article about that later--which we bought for \$800, it's a painting which was engraved by a Dutch or English engraver and was published. There was an article about it in some British illustrated magazine like Illustrated London News, but at that time it had a different name.



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HELD: It was Harper's Weekly. There was a periodical called Harper's Weekly. The print, a wood engraving, was published of this painting in Harper's Weekly in 1883, almost immediately after it had been painted. It was painted in '83. So the same year it was also reproduced in Harper's Weekly. But the interesting thing about it is that van Gogh saw that illustration. The picture is said to have been painted from an actual scene in New York City. A wood engraving of this painting, which appeared in Harper's Weekly the same year as the painting, was cut out in its reproduced form by Vincent van Gogh, and it was-- He cut it out from the magazine, because he thought it was a wonderful painting. It was exhibited in the van Gogh-- There was an exhibition in Brooklyn, "Van Gogh: Sources of Inspiration." Our painting, or the print of our painting, was exhibited.

There was just one more thing; I have to say now one more thing. It sounds as if everything was bought on my advice. That's not true. First of all, there was a director there, René Taylor, an Englishman who speaks beautiful Spanish. He lived many years in Spain. He was then the director. I was always away in New York, you see. René advised Luis, of course, also. In fact, it is true that the most popular painting of the museum was bought [by



René], which I pasted in here. That's called Flaming June by Lord Leighton, an English academic nineteenth-century painting. This is the most popular picture. People go crazy over it. Not only the people in Puerto Rico. My granddaughter, who is in college, she loves that painting. And I got her a poster, a big thing; she hangs it in her suite. Well, I don't know, you may not go overboard quite as much.

RIKALA: Well, it's a woman sleeping, and she's got a very diaphanous gown, and then there's water in the background.

HELD: A very sensuous picture. That painting is worth millions alone. This alone. Years ago, they had an offer for \$2 million for it, and they wouldn't part with it. It's the most popular picture, and René Taylor was the one-- There are some other Pre-Raphaelites which were bought later. I sort of was the first one with the Burne-Jones. But then we bought a Rossetti, and we bought some more Burne-Joneses, a very large one, some of them maybe on my advice, but René Taylor played a very important role. And then others. Occasionally Luis bought things on his own. I mean, he did not always ask people. I told him this was a good buy--I mean, congratulations--and he was pleased with it. He got a pat on the shoulder. But there were also things that were bought that I would not have suggested buying. Two years ago, he didn't buy anything, but he



accepted as a gift to the museum something so horrible that I told him, "I'm not coming to visit the museum as long as that picture is up." [laughter] It isn't even a single picture, it's a kind of horrid-- There's a man who donated this triptych, or polyptych. It is so horrid that I said, "I will not go." With a museum that has [a collection] on such a level-- I mean, you can look through the catalog a little and see.

RIKALA: Yes, I would like to.

HELD: They can't have this kind of trash. [laughter]

RIKALA: So this goes sort of back to my question about policy and guidelines. Because, yes, it's Ferré's--in a sense--private collection, because he picks, he makes the decisions.

HELD: Of course, I should have told you all this. The purchases are paid out of funds that belong to the Ferré Foundation. It's a charitable, public-spirited foundation which consists of something like 150,000 shares of Puerto Rican Cement. I think it's either 150,000 or 300,000 at the moment. It's either one or the other. The purchases are made, then, from dividends that you got from these shares. For a while Puerto Rican Cement was very successful, profitable. Just when he became governor-- I told you before-- I didn't follow it up, but you may remember I said when he became governor, that was not good for the museum.



Well, now I have to explain that. It was in '68. This was just a time of inflationary movement. What went up in those years was labor costs, production-- In a cement factory, you know, production and whatever expenses go into these things. Logic would have required that a bag of cement-- The price would have to go up. You know, if your expenses grow and if labor is more expensive to get the cement and prepare it and so on. Luis Ferré had just been elected governor. If he had, as one of the first things on his activity, permitted Puerto Rican Cement to raise the price of a bag of cement, people would of course have said, "So that's what he's doing."

RIKALA: Lining his own pockets.

HELD: "As soon as he's governor, working for his own pocket." So he was morally obliged to keep the same price for a bag of cement that they had charged all along. The result was that very soon no dividends came anymore from the investment.

RIKALA: Nothing for the museum.

HELD: You see, Puerto Rican Cement stopped paying dividends. At the time, I had bought about a hundred shares. They were \$20 a share, so I had bought a hundred shares of Puerto Rican Cement, because I thought it was a good thing and connected with the museum in some way. I think I bought it for \$6 a share. It used to be \$20 a



share, but it dropped down, and when it was at \$6 I thought, "What can I lose? One hundred shares is \$600." So I spent that. And it kept on dropping and hovered around \$2.50 a share, \$3 a share, because they made no profits. The business was running, but there was absolutely no profit. The museum got less and less money. Whatever he did in those years came really out of his own pocket, but he had cut down on that too. When Puerto Rican Cement rose again after years of paying no dividends, no interest, when it came up to \$6 again, I told my broker, "Sell it." That's a wash, as they call it, you know, you get back what you-- Puerto Rican Cement in recent years went up as high as \$50 a share. Just imagine! [laughter] So anyhow, now it's again pretty flourishing. Luis's son, who worked on improving the condition, he's a very intelligent man, the son of Luis. He has two children, a daughter and a son. That's Luisito. But he's now editor of one of the leading newspapers in Puerto Rico. He's doing very, very well as the owner of one of the great newspapers--it's called El Día--and Luisito is no longer involved with Puerto Rican Cement. Luis himself also no longer. Now he's really chiefly interested in politics, which he always was. He's nominally the leader of what is called the Statehood Party. [Do you] know about that?

RIKALA: No, I don't at all.



HELD: Well, probably I mentioned before the word commonwealth, and it's still a commonwealth, which it has been for about fifty years or so. And Luis always-- Usually an upper crust of the Puerto Rican society, they always pushed hard the idea that it should become the fifty-first state of the United States. They are officially citizens. They serve in our army, they fight in our wars, but they pay no federal taxes, and they cannot vote in presidential elections. So the Puerto Ricans always thought, correctly I think, they were citizens second-class. They would be real, full citizens with all the rights and all the duties and all the privileges if Puerto Rico becomes a state. Now he is the head of the Statehood Party and still pushes it hard. He had very high hopes, because our current president, [George H. W.] Bush, has been a friend of his. I mean, Luis was always a Republican, politically associated. He knew Eisenhower, he knew all the Republican bigwigs. When I visited him and came in his apartment and his office and so on, there were always the photos of Nixon and Eisenhower and all these people who wrote him, "To my dear friend, Luis Ferré." I mean, he knows that I'm not a Republican. [laughter] We argue a little, but not seriously. But at the moment, it doesn't look too promising for statehood because it has to pass-- I mean, first of all, Congress has to give them, I believe, permission to hold a



referendum. So far this hasn't been coming forth yet. You see, because if Congress agrees to a referendum and the Puerto Ricans vote then themselves for statehood, it would be very hard for Congress to say no. So Congress is doing things slowly. It won't happen very soon, if at all.

You see, we are coming from one thing to another, but-- My connection with the museum has of course to some extent familiarized me with Puerto Rican politics, and I've met quite a number of people. He [Ferré] appointed me a trustee, but I didn't want to stay there that involved very much, because it would have forced me to travel more often. From a distance you can't really do anything like this. My rule has been at least once a year to go down there and look at what's happening and examine the condition of pictures and so on. I should perhaps say that my wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held] also went down fairly often to restore some of the pictures under the most unsatisfactory conditions, because Stone, the architect of the new building, you know-- Did I mention the name before?

RIKALA: No, I was going to ask you.

HELD: I think it was Edward Durell Stone. He was a rather well known architect, and he was the architect for the building. He was very stubborn. He did not really know what a museum really needs. But Luis was so impressed by Stone, who at that time was at the height of his career, and



he was so proud to have landed a really prominent and famous architect that he did not really push the things that I always told him you have to push with the architect. For instance, there was no provision made for any place where pictures could be restored. My wife had to work either in the rooms or in a little corridor out to a garden or something. It was very unsatisfactory. Luis has of course now seen the need for that. He has now a very good conservation studio in a separate house. He bought additional houses nearby, in back of the building. One of these houses will now have the administration. There was not enough space for administration. It was all exhibition space. All exhibition space and nothing for the administration, for the conservation, for storage and so on, for education, a room for showing movies or concerts or something.

RIKALA: The real working of a museum.

HELD: The real working of the museum. All of this was neglected against my will, but I was not capable of standing up to a celebrity like Stone, especially a celebrity who was so convinced of his grandeur.

RIKALA: That's quite interesting too, because again in recent years, architects have been so keen to build museums. I mean, that's just in the past few years.

HELD: Now they know a little more about it. But at that



time, he convinced Luis Ferré that not only would he have a fine collection of paintings and sculptures and things like that, but he also would have a grand work of architecture, you see. So of course he said, "This is a work of art, and nothing can be changed or added. It must remain always like this." Which is, of course, the basic mistake in the Ponce museum. It should be flexible.

RIKALA: Well, I was wondering-- You mentioned the rooms were hexagonal. I mean, how satisfactory can that be for showing, for hanging?

HELD: Well, it's not too bad, although Luis has so many paintings and the space is so limited that in every one of these rooms there are two levels. Paintings are hanging on two levels, the way they used to in Europe in the eighteenth century or so. But of course Luis is impressionable, and Stone was an impressive character. So Luis himself then took over, and he said then, "Oh, nothing must ever be changed. This is a work of art." So he just accepted what he had been told by Stone. But he also realized that something must be done to provide space for all these things, and so he bought additional spaces. He bought I think, as far as this is concerned, space for administration and space for conservation. That problem has been solved. Now, I still would like to see one courtyard which was never really used for anything covered over and made into a



lecture hall and concert hall and something like this. The last time I was there, Luis said, "Yes, it's really a good idea." But you never know what really happens. He is also not the youngest-- He is a year older than I am; we are just one year apart. So he is a man of eighty-seven and he's no longer quite so flexible. [laughter]

RIKALA: Sort of hypothetically speaking, or just to use your imagination-- Could there be circumstances today that would allow for the same kind of endeavor?

HELD: No, it couldn't be done. Unless you have billions of dollars to spend. It can't be done because the level is so high. The price level of smaller Dutch paintings could. That hasn't risen quite so much. I mean, to some extent, a part of the museum could be duplicated today, but there are other parts which just couldn't be had anymore. You could not get Rubens's Head of a Magus for \$30,000, because the same thing would cost today \$2 million probably or something like this. That Lord Leighton, you know, that would be unavailable. There's a Murillo painting, a beautiful painting of the Immaculate Conception, and that would also go into millions. At that time it was a little over-- There are two paintings that he has for which he paid more between \$30,000 and \$35,000. That was the absolute top-notch. Everything else was below that, and even most of them below \$10,000. That you cannot do anymore, because even the



paintings that he bought at that time, let's say for \$3,000-- They can still be had, this kind of category, but it would be \$25,000 or \$30,000. Now it's not astronomical, but it's no longer quite the same. It's the same with my own collection. I mean, I bought drawings for under hundreds, you know, \$10, \$3, \$25. And in the drawing field, that is completely out. He never collected drawings, but he has a beautiful group of Burne-Jones drawings, which I think came with one of the purchases that he did in England. With René, he made occasional trips to England. He also has deaccessioned a few pictures, but for good reasons he regrets having done it. There was a man who belonged to the family of his wife--

Oh, Luis Ferré, I should perhaps say that he was married to a lady--Lorencita [Ferré] was her name--from a very fine Puerto Rican family with very good connections, social connections and so on. But she was very, very sick, had a very bad heart condition. In those years when he was governor--she of course was also in the governor's palace, Fortaleza, but I didn't even see her-- She had constant care. There were two nurses who spelled each other day and night, and then she died. And Luis married the nurse, one of the nurses. She was a very intelligent woman, and I'll tell you something about her. She was socially a completely



different level. She's a very simple Puerto Rican woman with great intelligence and with great ambition. She had, of course, complete nurse's training. She was absolutely an excellent nurse. She was still young, very beautiful. She began taking courses, and she made her medical doctor. She is now a trained doctor and takes good care of Don Luis, as you can imagine. [laughter] Wherever he travels, Tiody [Ferré]--that's her name--goes along. But Tiody, with being ambitious, she has also developed an interest in art. She has very simple taste, and when they travel around and she sees something, she says, "Oh, let's buy it." So he has made a number of purchases of that type. But they found a solution for that. Tiody, being also a very good businesswoman, thinks, "All right. If it's not good enough for the museum, I'll sell it again and I'll make some money." So she, being the wife of a rather wealthy man-- But she still sells a painting to some people, you know. She's a character, you know. Very different.

RIKALA: She's very resourceful.

HELD: Resourceful, yeah. She's an interesting person. She brought a grown-up son into the marriage, who is himself now a doctor. I mean, they are intelligent people, but of course not at all what you'd call the upper class of Puerto Rico. In a way that's much better, because the upper-class



Puerto Rico is only interested in money and not really in culture.

RIKALA: The obvious thing that you think about when you think about the story of this museum is that it was perhaps the last opportunity--

HELD: To do something.

RIKALA: --to do something like that. Because now, mostly in the 1980s, the prices of art have become unbelievable, unimaginable prices.

HELD: Of course, from the beginning, I told him it is not worth spending hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars--now it would be almost millions--for a Cézanne. It would be desirable to have also some of these, but it would be unjustifiable to spend that much. Surely at that time it would have been unjustifiable if we really could build a collection that has a great deal of interest, that offers so many things to many people.

RIKALA: And that's in keeping with his own financial interest. I mean, your recommendation to him was in keeping with how he, as you described it, wanted to bargain.

[laughter]

HELD: When you look through such a catalog now, for instance, you will see an enormous number of pictures with interesting names and interesting subjects and all that, and this museum has become already internationally known.



People now come to see the museum because they know there's a large collection there of some interest. Then every year we get requests for loans. I could point out to you maybe three, four dozen pictures that have already traveled.

There was a beautiful group once exhibited in the Metropolitan in connection with the exhibition of French paintings in America. Whenever there are such exhibitions, they immediately look through the Ponce catalog and say, "Oh, could we have that?" or "Could we have that?" Now, when I mentioned before that we sometimes bought anonymous pictures-- Didn't I tell you that? When I just thought, "Luis buy this, it looks good"-- It so happens that this picture on the cover-- We bought that. It had no name, or a name that I knew from the beginning would not be right. The French scholar Pierre Rosenberg at the Louvre--he's one of the curators for the Louvre--he said, "Of course it's a Lebrun painting. It's Charles Lebrun. It's a documented, proven engraving." So there we had a fine painting without a name, and it did get a very good name. Let me see what we say in the catalog about it. It may have come with a funny name.

RIKALA: And you wrote the catalog entries.

HELD: In this one I did the catalog entries. In the second edition, which has of course more paintings in it, because in the meantime more were bought, and more research was done



and so on-- There, a good deal of it was also written by René, and there was a student I think was also involved.

Let me see that Charles Lebrun. What do they say about the picture? "Minerva and Venus Clipping the Wings of Cupid, acquired at Klein's." It's [listed as being] by Padovanino. It had an Italian name. I said, "Buy it, but Padovanino is surely wrong." But I didn't know what it was. We paid \$3,500 for a Lebrun. Thanks to Félibien's minute description of the château of Vaux-le-Vicomte and its contents, the Ponce painting is known to depict an allegory of the second marriage in 1651 of Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's famous finance minister, to Mary Magdalena du Caste, and so on. You have the whole thing now here. Two preparatory drawings exist for the painting, in the Louvre and a private collection. An engraving after the painting was done by Marcène D'Guy in 1763, and that was sold in 1981 at Christie's. Well. So it was on the basis of the engraving that Pierre Rosenberg was able to identify it. There's an article, P. P. Cuzin and Pierre Rosenberg, "The LeBrun at Ponce," in Burlington Magazine, Vol. 116, January 1974. And so again and again, paintings that we bought on a hunch sometimes were then later identified and published.

RIKALA: That's very interesting. So in the meantime, doing this and teaching, you were also collecting for yourself.

HELD: Well, you see, going around to dealers or auctions,



of course I sometimes saw things that I knew Luis would not be interested in.

RIKALA: Wouldn't want.

HELD: I was able to buy, and of course the prices that I paid were proportionally even lower than what he paid.

[laughter] You see from this that he paid very little.

With dealers I found sometimes drawings. The level was very low, and some of the fine drawings that I bought came from small auctions. Quite early, in the forties and fifties, there were often drawing collections. You must remember that those were years after the war when people came over from Europe--even some had come earlier--and they brought things with them. Then for one reason or another, they had to sell these things. So they were thrown into auction, and I found them. I went home from an auction once and had paid \$30, and I brought home half a dozen drawings.

RIKALA: That's amazing.

HELD: Like that.

RIKALA: And there, too, the prices of drawings now have gone up considerably.

HELD: Oh, yes.

RIKALA: What really causes--?

HELD: Well, it was the art history. You will hear that tonight, that art historians are responsible for the rise. They have given so many art history courses. Every college



has an art history course. It became culturally acceptable for people to be interested in art, to buy art and collect art, and of course gradually drawings came to the fore. Because that is particularly considered sophisticated, a person who buys drawings rather than paintings, because you get in at the bottom of the creative act.

RIKALA: That's interesting. Yes, I am very curious about that sort of phenomenon. Should we take a break for today?



TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

JUNE 28, 1991

RIKALA: Let's start this afternoon speaking about your role as an expert. Some of the stories that you explained at Bennington College--

HELD: Well, at Bennington College in that talk [on May 26], I mentioned a few cases where I was a consultant in litigation, in lawsuits that were brought by one or the other party. I think the cases that I have mentioned were interesting enough cases where I testified for the government in cases of tax--

RIKALA: I guess it's tax evasion.

HELD: The wrong kind of tax deductions. Tax deductions taken for works of art which are not worth what they took. I mentioned then also a similar case, a case of a lawsuit in Germany where a long, drawn-out lawsuit was not really ever decided, although I had been given to understand that the judge had a feeling that it was finished, that my statement really settled the matter. But it was never settled because first of all it dragged on-- The parties, the lawyers, all raised various problems and so on, and then the man who had brought the lawsuit died, and so the whole thing then was no longer continued. But I think I said and showed to the people who were there [at Bennington College] that, a few years later, the distinction which I had made between the



original and the copy was actually printed in the main Berlin catalog, that the painting which this man had tried to establish as the first original by Rubens really was already listed in the catalog as a copy. In the last ten years or so, whenever it was mentioned everyone agreed that it was a copy.

I had another case where I myself was almost threatened with a lawsuit, curiously enough by a man with whom I had been on very good terms. He had a painting attributed to Rubens which he had bought before he even knew me. I don't volunteer things. If people don't ask my opinion, I'm not jumping in their face and telling them, "Oh, you bought a lousy picture," or something like this. I don't do that. Then I, however, informed him in the forties-- This goes way back into the 1940s, when I worked on a book called Rubens in America [1947]. It was a catalog of all Rubens paintings and drawings in America. I divided the catalog into two sections, one the works that I considered original, and then all the other pictures and drawings which I could not accept, which must have been copies or imitations or something. I called him up and said, "We never talked about your painting, this particular painting, but I must tell you now I have prepared a book and I think it's only fair that I tell you that it will go into my second section." Then he blew up, and whatever friendship we had had was finished



from that moment.

Anyhow, to make a matter short, he had a lawyer who asked me to his office. That was already the second meeting. He had two meetings with that lawyer. And when he asked me a second time, I asked a lawyer whom I knew to accompany me, so that I knew exactly what was going on. My lawyer then later when we left told me--I hadn't even understood really the drift of the conversation--that they thought I had called up this man in order to blackmail him to pay me money to move it from the second section into the first section. He could also sue for damages, that I had damaged his property and so on.

But, fortunately, that painting had been in a public exhibition a number of years before, and hence was, as the lawyers say, "in the public domain." Anyone could say about it whatever he wanted to, and so he had no grounds. He threatened me with a kind of-- He wouldn't sue-- Well, you might sue someone for blackmail too, but he wanted to scare me in something that I might say. But my lawyer said forget about it. Nothing came of it. But I was so disappointed in that person that I never had any more contact with him.

There were other such cases. I don't want to go into that, but of course this was a part of my activity, and in a sense it also shows that my scholarly interests are always very strongly linked to the question of authenticity of



paintings. Not all scholars have the same interests.

People who are interested in iconography, they're interested in the subject matter but not so much in the question of is this really the original or do we have only a copy.

RIKALA: But does that question have to do with the nature of Rembrandt and Rubens drawings in particular?

HELD: No. The questions of authenticity are always involved where the works of art represent a certain value.

It is all linked up with the art market, and that is of course a risky area. I have known and seen cases of many people who were talented scholars but who could not keep a distinction between--what shall I say?--their scholarly conscience and their benefit as experts. You know, there are some people who wrote constantly certificates for pictures, and their conscience was flexible, so to speak.

[laughter] They thought, "It could well be an original. If I say it's an original, then of course I can charge that much more for the picture." Fortunately, I never was really faced with a situation, but some of these people were in situations where they needed the money, you know. In the early years of my stay in this country, I didn't have a lot of money, but I always had enough to get ourselves fed and educate my children. So this kind of temptation--which I know was very strong, and some others yielded to the temptation--never really touched me in any serious way. But



there are some names of people-- I could give you half a dozen names of people. When someone comes to me and says, "I have a certificate for the genuineness of this particular picture," Rubens or van Dyck or Rembrandt or something, if I know the name, the person who wrote it, then I know it's very probably not right. Among them is a man who is still a professor at a university in Germany. But I know that he had very hard times. What shall I say? He had a flexible approach to these problems.

RIKALA: That's very sad.

HELD: And it's too bad. Of course, in the end, their certificates are not worth anything, you know.

RIKALA: If their credibility is lost.

HELD: Their credibility is gone. People tell me, "We have a certificate by this man, but of course everyone knows it is not worth anything."

But to come back to my approach as a scholar, this really in a way goes back to my original intention to be a museum man. The man with whom I worked, Friedländer, Max J. Friedländer-- Not Walter, you know. Max J. Friedländer is the one with whom I worked for eight months in Berlin and remained in close contact with even later. He was constantly asked to voice opinions. Now, you see, of course there is one difference between a man who is curator or director of a museum and a private scholar, the way I was.



Because the function of a museum curator is to give those opinions, and he is not supposed to make any charge. He's a public servant, and part of his job is to listen to people. People came to him and said, "I inherited this picture. Can you help me to identify what it is?" This kind of thing. He wrote a lot of certificates, Friedländer, especially in early Flemish and Dutch art. At least as long as he was director of the museum, the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, he could not make a charge.

It didn't belong to the duties of a university scholar to give such opinions. I mean, it's taking time out of my research, and I have obligations. If I gave an opinion, I made a charge. And my relationship to these large auction galleries has been-- They have come quite often to me in recent years. I don't make them a charge because they send me their catalogs. I get all these very expensive catalogs. But if they ask me, as they did recently, to come to New York to look at a painting, then I don't think that a catalog pays for my-- So then I make a charge. But other university professors are not really approached so much, because they have not developed the expertise, you know. They may study the relationship of artists to the literature of their time or the influence that society exercised, but they are not so much concerned, as I have always been, with distinguishing between the real thing and the copy and the



imitation.

For instance, in the last major publication, the Rubens oil sketches [The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue (1980)], you know, there are 460 or so oil sketches, and I had to distinguish in every case whether it's an original or a copy. Sometimes some of these oil sketches were copied more than once, and then I have a whole list of copies, but this one is the original. That always interested me. There were cases where there was no original. There was something that looked like a Rubens sketch, that had all the characteristics. It may have even been related to one of the larger paintings, but it was not an original work. In that case I drew the conclusion that the original must be lost. We know an original sketch only from a copy, you know, which is methodologically rather an interesting case. I always was very much interested in--

RIKALA: So that's a possible, potential existing oil sketch--

HELD: That may turn up one day, or it may be lost. It may be completely lost, or it may turn up, and as a matter of fact some oil sketches did turn up, even after the book was published. I published another article some years later. Some new oil sketches which have turned up, and one of them was one that I had assumed must have existed at one time.

RIKALA: Yes, that's very fascinating, this idea that--



HELD: Reconstruct an original work from copies. From one or several copies.

RIKALA: And although you've worked for an extraordinary amount of time collecting material and you're the most expert in this material, that there still might be one or two floating pieces of the puzzle that one can never absolutely--

HELD: Well, there must have been many more oil sketches by Rubens, just as there were many more drawings, also. You know, my drawing book also-- The drawing book [Rubens: Selected Drawings (1959)] consists of a rather long introduction, a text. I mean, it's not just a catalog. The oil sketches also. Have you seen that there are quite a number of pages which are just coherent text, and then comes the catalog? The same thing is true, of course, for the older publication of Rubens drawings, which came out in enlarged edition just last year.

RIKALA: I'm sure you would agree that these books of yours, these major works, have advanced the-- I mean, this is the frontier of the scholarship.

HELD: You might say so. What I feel is my obligation is not only to prevent bad copies being sold for good money-- You know, that is one aspect. But it is also, in a sense, I have to keep the very name of Rubens free of some poor attributions. I mean, many of the artists that I worked



with-- I worked also with Jordaens, for instance. Although I never wrote a book, I wrote several articles on Jordaens. I consider it my duty to serve these artists and keep the historical record clear of accumulations that are not worthy of the masters. If any of these pictures that drift through the art market-- And there are some paintings-- Every few years the same painting comes to me, but it is now in a different hand. [laughter] But these accretions to the oeuvre of the master-- It is the duty of the scholar who respects the greatness of the artists to protect, so to speak, the artists from these false accretions, from inferior works of art.

RIKALA: Well, so this is the perfect opportunity to ask, then, about the Rembrandt Polish Rider controversy.

HELD: Well, have you ever read that New Yorker article?

RIKALA: I have once, and I'm keen to read it again.

HELD: Well, I mentioned it in the lecture, that until about five, six years ago, not a soul questioned the attribution of The Polish Rider. If you take up a book on Rembrandt until, let's say, 1980 that covers more or less the whole era of the master, The Polish Rider is always there. It's exhibited at the Frick [Collection], and of course the people at the Frick also publish it in their own catalog as beyond any doubt. Then this Dutch scholar [Josua Bruyn], almost in passing, said, "It's not by Rembrandt. It is



probably by--" I can give you the name; I just can't think of it. [Willem Drost] And of course I have written a very long article on The Polish Rider ["Rembrandt's Polish Rider." Art Bulletin 26 (1944): 246-65]. In fact I was the first. I began in '42, I think, and then in 1944 the article was published. It was really the first extensive treatment of that picture from every point of view. I mean, I would like you to read it one day, this article. Then I tried to give a certain interpretation to the picture. Then a number of other scholars--Dutch scholars, Polish scholars, and so on--wrote about the picture, and some of them differed from my interpretation, but none of them ever questioned the authenticity of the work.

This is the new book that came out this year [Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and Other Studies]. You see, this is 1991. It came out this year, and it is an enlarged edition of the old book [the 1969 edition]. It begins, as you see here, with something that I call "Rembrandt Dämmerung?" with question mark, and that is where I deal a little with the current situation in Rembrandt research. Here is The Polish Rider, and then at the end I have postscripts to individual sections. Here is The Polish Rider, the postscript. This is the new edition, and I'm dealing here, then, with what-ever opinions have been expressed by other scholars. It begins with [Wilhelm R.] Valentiner, Gary



Schwartz in '85, then [J. C.] Kannegieter. [Zdzislaw] Zygułski is a Polish scholar. [Juliusz A.] Chroscicki is a very fine Polish scholar. They all had different ideas of what the painting presents, what is represented in it. Then here [Reiner] Hausherr-- You see, you can count. There must be about ten authors whom I quote, and there is one Polish scholar--Chroscicki I think is the one--who comes very close to what I had said. In other words, he is coming back actually to my own interpretation. So to every one of these earlier studies I devoted a postscript.

For instance, Rembrandt's Aristotle, postscript 1990, that's only two and a half pages. Then The Polish Rider has a longer one; then there's the Juno, one and a half pages; and then the Tobit postscript is only half a page. Then I have here still notes; I mean not postscript but notes. Maybe there's not one on The Polish Rider, let me see. There are no notes on The Polish Rider, but there are some notes on the Aristotle. Didn't I show you this, that I reproduced a cartoon from the New Yorker?

RIKALA: Oh, no. I didn't see that.

HELD: That cost me \$200, because the New Yorker always charges a fee, but it fit so well what I had said in my text. So The Polish Rider-- My interpretation had been criticized by other scholars. In my postscript I give reasons why I can't accept those things.



RIKALA: But that's what interpretation is all about, is having--

HELD: Yes, but none of them had ever questioned the attribution. As I said, now there is this man, or rather a team of Dutch scholars, who are now cleansing the oeuvre of Rembrandt and throw out a lot of pictures. They're throwing out The Polish Rider. I have almost demonstratively used The Polish Rider on the cover of this book to reaffirm my faith in the authenticity of this picture. If they come up, of course, someday with absolute, airtight proof that it is not a Rembrandt, I would have to accept it, but I have grave doubts that they ever will.

RIKALA: Historically it was always considered a Rembrandt painting?

HELD: It appeared for the first time in Polish records, not in others, because it came from Poland. You see, it was found actually in a Polish castle. It was bought by an American man by the name of Huntington. It was the Huntington collection, and he bought it around 1900 or roughly like this. But the first mention of the picture is in 1792 or something. That is, just about two hundred years ago the picture was first mentioned. And as a Rembrandt. Then it is mentioned occasionally, always in Polish records, until the end of the nineteenth century. No one in the West really knew it. Then it was at an exhibition I think in



Amsterdam and then it was discovered by the Western scholars, and very soon this man Huntington bought it. Continuously from 1900 until 1980, roughly '80, it was always considered a real Rembrandt. It fitted very nicely stylistically, and of course it's a wonderful painting. I mean, it's a great work of art. You don't want to give up a great work of art so easily.

Let me see what I say there in the postscript. There's something I want to look up about The Polish Rider. At the end of the paragraph of this postscript I say, even in parenthesis only, "Since the Dutch scholars who claim that the picture was not painted by Rembrandt at all have not so far come forth with concrete arguments in support of their view, I prefer to let that sleeping dog lie." You see, they have not given any reason.

RIKALA: They haven't given any counter-artist either.

HELD: No, nothing. Oh, yes, they have suggested the name of an artist, but only so-- Well, this may amuse you and is perhaps pertinent, too. A German scholar [Werner Sumowski] who lives in Stuttgart has written several volumes on the pupils of Rembrandt. Among those pupils is that man who is supposed to have painted The Polish Rider. I wrote to that man and I said, "You have written on that man. You are the only one who has written on that artist. Have you ever considered that he might have painted The Polish Rider?" He



said, "No, absolutely not." I mean, the man who has written on that artist. So far, I can say it does not stand on very strong feet.

RIKALA: Besides this notion of purifying the complete works of Rembrandt from anything extraneous, what would be the point for these Dutch scholars--? In any way is it dubious? Are they trying to make a name for themselves as scholars?

HELD: No. They feel that there has been so much pro and con about the era of Rembrandt and that it has been shrunk. There were other people, people before they set to work, who had said the Valentiner-era list is much too large, and I agree with that. Then they got, evidently, some funds, because Rembrandt is the greatest Dutch artist, so they could raise some money in Holland. A team of I think originally six scholars sat together and said, "We must decide what is really Rembrandt and what is not." I think the whole idea is already dubious. First of all, one cannot imagine that there is ever a consensus among six people.

It's like the Supreme Court, you know. So if there are minorities and minority and majority opinions, then where are we, you know. There maybe two people say, "Oh, it could be Rembrandt," and the other four said-- Well, that team now shrunk. Some people got out that didn't want to do the work, and now it's primarily two men who are really doing it.



Of course they travel everywhere. They try to get X rays, and then they take extensive notes. When you look at those volumes-- They smell at the pictures; they look with magnification at the brushstrokes; and so on. But it's hardly ever in there that you see they have a feel for the aesthetic qualities of the pictures.

So it's a curious undertaking, and it has been criticized. When their first volumes came out, immediately some other scholars said, "Yes, yes, that's fine, but this painting should really be considered by Rembrandt." Or "They included something that I could not accept." I mean, I talk for other people. I mention somewhere in the book that a very spirited attack on some of the opinions, negative opinions, has been launched by one of the curators of the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. It is hopeless to expect that scholars ever in those marginal areas-- I mean, the core of the era, no one ever really questioned--although I think The Polish Rider should belong to the core--but then there are always marginal areas, gray areas, where it's very difficult to really come to a conclusion.

Their certainty, "This is Rembrandt and this is not Rembrandt," is really not methodologically safe. Safe is the word that I'm looking for. Because they do omit the possibility that our faculties of making such decisions binding may not be strong enough. Of course you immediately



would say, "How about your own work?" You know, the drawings and the oil sketches of Rubens. Well, I did my best. So far I have not had any serious objections to anything that I've done, so I feel rather confident that my work will stand. But I'm perfectly conscious of the fact that there may be areas where other scholars have different opinions. So one shouldn't overestimate one's own--

Now, first of all, in my activities as an expert, I think you ought to be aware that I never make a final statement on anything that I have not seen in the original, unless it is so obviously-- Naturally, if someone comes to me and says, as a man did-- He sent me a photograph-- I have the material with me, and this will be in fact, by the way, an article which will be published some time this year or early next. A man sent me a picture which was clearly a Dutch painting. I didn't know at the time who might have painted it, but he said, "I have discovered this very important painting by Velázquez." Now, you know who he is, he's a great Spanish painter. Of course this thing was so ridiculously wrong that I could tell him, "Dear Mr. so-and-so, it's not my field, but I'm quite sure it's not by the master." There was a long correspondence, sometimes rather acrimonious, because he was so sure of himself. But he has now seen the light, and he has given me permission to publish it as something entirely different and not by a



great master.

The painting for me had a special interest. Not so much because of the artist, although it has some interest on that score too, but it is a double portrait. The man portrayed in that picture is a very important Dutch poet, and he was a great scholar. He played a very important role in the politics of the seventeenth century. You may have heard the name Constantijn Huygens. It's a portrait of Huygens with his wife, and the additional benefit of this identification was that his wife-- Of whom we know a lot through his poetry, because he was very much enamored and he wrote beautiful poems about her. Other people actually also admired her greatly. No one ever knew what she looked like. Here for the first time we have a portrait of his wife. In Holland in the seventeenth century, women kept their own name, their maiden name. She was not Mrs. Huygens, but she was Susanna van Baerle all the time.

Well, I began to say that when a painting is clearly so impossible, the attribution-- If someone says it's Velázquez and I see immediately it's a Dutch painting, then I can tell him it's not true. If it could be a Rubens, or is close to a Rubens, then I always say to the people, "My impression of the picture is such and such, that it is no good, but I would have to see the painting itself to make a final decision." I would always warn my students and also



colleagues, "Don't make up your mind from a photograph alone. You have to see the picture itself."

RIKALA: Yes, that's invaluable advice, because as an expert, you've learned to draw upon all your faculties and your senses to--

HELD: If people ask me, "Well, what do you look for?"--

RIKALA: How do you know that you know?

HELD: Sometimes it may be quite obvious things. For instance, dating is sometimes facilitated if you know something about the history of costume. If a portrait is supposed to have been painted around 1630 or '40, but you know that collar was worn by the ladies only in '50 or '60-- You see, that of course eliminates already a number of possibilities.

RIKALA: So it's like detective work.

HELD: Yeah, to some extent it is detective work. But I also quite often ask for X rays; I always look at X rays. Have I shown you in my library two X rays hanging?

RIKALA: No, I don't think I've ever seen an X ray of a painting.

HELD: Well, we can go back to the library. I can show that to you. One has to look, sometimes very closely. One has to look occasionally with a magnifying glass. X rays, of course, can give you an idea not only about condition, but also about pentimenti, about changes of plan. I talked



about that in my talk at the college. Above all, you judge the quality of the picture, and this of course only a lifelong experience can give you, a real understanding of the level of quality of a painting. I think I have developed in my long life a feeling of whether a picture is really worthy of a great name or not.

In a way as a confirmation of this, I can quote my own collecting activity. You see, I collected sometimes drawings not because I knew who did them, but I realized it was a good drawing. It had quality. If a work of art has quality, then the artist who did it must have been at a certain level. I have this lovely little picture of a lady sitting in a room. I've had it for thirty years. To this day, I don't know who painted it. But I know that it must have been a respectable painter who did it. I was confirmed in that, because many years afterwards I found a copy in the New York art market. I have a photo of the copy of this picture. So it was good enough to be copied by some other artist, but the copy was not as good as the original.

RIKALA: Well, let's talk a little bit about your private collection and your desire to collect. I have one volume of the catalog, but you said there is another volume as well.

HELD: Frank [Franklin] W. Robinson-- I don't know who D. S. B. is. Well, I don't know. [David S. Brooke, director of the Clark Art Institute] Anyhow, he signed this foreword.



He [Robinson] assigned as a term paper--no, I think it was really a master's thesis or something--to prepare an exhibition of sixty drawings from the Held collection. And there you have now Master Drawings from the Collection of Ingrid and Julius Held [edited by Elizabeth Milroy and Gwendolyn Owens]. I had nothing to do with it. I gave them complete freedom to look at those drawings, to study them and write on them and even to make changes in attribution. In one case, they assigned a different name than I had. [laughter] I said, "You're perfectly free to do that." This catalog that you showed me is not much of a catalog. I mean, it's very small and only short pieces. Here it is a much more representative thing. The entries are quite long, the literature is quoted, and then the reproductions are also very good. Very nice. Every drawing is reproduced. You can look at it. Many of the drawings that are in this catalog now are the ones that went to Washington.



TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

JUNE 28, 1991

RIKALA: You sold most of this collection to the National Gallery [of Art], or gave them--

HELD: No, I mentioned it. I mentioned why I was willing to sell.

RIKALA: Right. Because of your wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held]'s illness--

HELD: It came just at a crucial moment. I said, "I never had thought of selling it, but I may really have to." So they selected about sixty drawings-- Not exactly these sixty [in the catalog of the exhibition], although most of them have gone. About sixty or maybe a little more than sixty drawings, and they told me what they think they are worth. I made no price. I had no experience to put a value on it. So they said, "All right. We want this drawing, and how about so and so much," you know. I said, "Whatever you say." I didn't bargain or anything. This drawing, for instance, which is also here on the cover-- This is Prud'hon, that I always loved so much that I said, "I'm not going to sell that." I still have that drawing. I still have, actually, about two hundred or so--a little over two hundred--drawings at the Clark [Art Institute], but the cream is gone. You know, the cream, the best drawings, are at the National Gallery. Then I gave them a hundred



drawings. I donated exactly one hundred drawings to them, for which they didn't have to pay, because that had a certain tax benefit for me. Now, when they approached me, I knew exactly that they were after a few drawings, some that they absolutely wanted.

RIKALA: You knew you had a good bait for them.

HELD: Well, I didn't want to bait them--

RIKALA: No, but I mean you knew you had the excellent drawings in your hand.

HELD: I knew that they are drawings that they would like to have.

RIKALA: In their collection, yes.

HELD: This was one of them. This is a drawing by Eakins, Thomas Eakins.

RIKALA: Oh, yes. Now, I've seen that published in their catalog.

HELD: You've seen it. It's hanging on a poster in my-- Did you see it? Did you walk in the kitchen?

RIKALA: Yes.

HELD: You saw that. Well, this is a drawing. It's a small drawing, but Eakins's drawings are so rare that the National Gallery are very proud to have that. Of course, when I saw that with a dealer in New York-- The man knew that it was Eakins, but it was quite a long time ago. There I had to pay a price. I couldn't steal it as-- I mean, I never stole



anything--

RIKALA: No, I know, not really. [laughter]

HELD: I didn't get it cheaply. I traded them one or two minor paintings and I think even a few drawings. But I just had to have it.

RIKALA: So you came across it at a dealer's?

HELD: At a dealer's, yes. Let me see what they say. The dealer had it from an estate. It was used for an illustration in Scribner's Monthly, I think. It was illustrated in Scribner's Monthly in, let me see-- Doesn't it give the date here? It must have been 1881 or something. Let me see. According to art historians, he was paid \$50. It illustrated an article, "A Day in the Ma'sh," Scribner's Monthly, July 1881. Then that dealer in New York, he got it from an estate of the publisher who had it. The dealer is Berry Hill Gallery, New York. I bought it from them. I really had to sacrifice in order to get it, but I always had a special interest in and weakness for Eakins. When I saw a drawing by him--as I said, I knew they are so exceedingly rare--I would have done anything to get it.

Then there was another drawing which I knew that they would want to have. That was [Egon] Schiele, a portrait by Schiele, which also is quite valuable to them. Of course, Schiele drawings now have become a little more common. This was the drawing by Schiele. You may have seen it on the



farm; there's a big poster. While I still had it, this was exhibited somewhere and it was on a poster. So this they also wanted to have. Then there were many others.

Now, this is one that I still own, an Italian drawing. This one is a very important drawing by an anonymous master. There were two drawings by this master with a dealer in Switzerland. I knew the people personally. I was there, and they had two drawings which they had bought from the Liechtenstein collection. I said, "Gosh, how much do you ask for these?" He said, "Well, I must get \$200 for one of them." Then I said, "Well, I would love to have both, but I can't afford two." So I bought only one. I should have sacrificed anything to get the second one, because later on the drawing was, of course, worth also much more. And the National Gallery paid me more than \$200.

RIKALA: Yes, I'm sure they must have. [laughter]

HELD: I told you that they paid decently. Not what I could get now today for these drawings. It must have been about eight years ago. In those eight years drawings have gone up a great deal. You can look through this if you want to. I always kept an eye open for drawings. I bought them all over. Wherever I traveled, I went into stores to see what they had. I bought a lovely drawing in a little town in France. I saw it in a window of an antique dealer. That kind of thing. I also bought paintings. Many of the more



valuable paintings in my collection don't belong to me anymore. They belong to Anna [Held Audette] and to [James] Michael [Held], to my daughter and my son, and even my grandchildren. Every one of my grandchildren already owns a painting. And Anna owns, for instance, a very beautiful still life by Peter Claesz, which is on exhibition at the Clark Art Institute. There's another painting by Gustave Doré which is also hanging in the gallery, and that belongs to her also. Then there is a very fine large portrait by a Swiss painter, Heintz, Josef Heintz, which I donated to the Clark. That's a gift from me. I had so many privileges there, and I have even a desk there where I can work in an office. So I thought I would donate-- Is that mentioned here?

RIKALA: Well, I was wondering. You have these lectures that are named after you--

HELD: That honor, what is it called? That is the art history department. They are given at the Clark, but it is not the Clark. It's the art history department, the graduate school there.

RIKALA: At Williams [College].

HELD: I don't know whether I mentioned that I at least twice gave a series of ten lectures at the Metropolitan Museum [of Art].

RIKALA: Oh, no, you haven't mentioned that, no.



HELD: I should have.

RIKALA: Let's talk about that.

HELD: I gave twice a series of ten public lectures. One was on drawing and another one on connoisseurship.

RIKALA: When did these take place?

HELD: I always gave a course on connoisseurship. When? That was when I still lived in New York.

RIKALA: New York. So before 1970.

HELD: Before 1970.

RIKALA: You mentioned that the value of these drawings has increased a lot in the past, say, ten years. We talked about this, but I don't think on tape before: the issue of the cost of art having gone up and the proliferation of art history in the United States. I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about that more broadly, how the discipline has affected perhaps the art market--that's one of your interpretations--and how art history has changed.

HELD: Well, those are two different things, really. I showed the people when I gave my talk at the college a long article--it was really quite long--from the New York Times Magazine. They had asked me to write about how values are established in the art market. Who and what determines the value of paintings, or something like this. Of course there are all kinds of factors involved: condition of the picture, subject matter, the name of the artist, and so on.



But I said it's very important to realize that the art historians have contributed greatly to the shifting of values. You know, art historians, for instance, have not been so very much concerned with, let's say, the English portrait tradition. They have investigated artists, let's say, like Caravaggio or George de la Tour, because the art historians became very much interested in some of these previously less known artists and investigated their role, the influence which they exercised. I mean, Caravaggio's influence is now practically commonplace, but it was not so thirty years ago. The interest which art historians developed in certain traditions, certain trends in art, is reflected in the way the art market works and manipulates the values.

When I wrote that piece a long time ago-- It was in the sixties. When I wrote the piece, I almost ridiculed a little those French society painters and academicians of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s and eighties and nineties, they fetched the high prices. Now look at it today. You can't get them for a few hundred. It has changed again. Suddenly the academic painters of the nineteenth century have become very interesting to younger art historians who are studying the social background. How they reflected, let's say, the bourgeoisie, the French bourgeoisie of the later nineteenth century, and how the spreading of capitalism influenced the artists, and so on.



RIKALA: So taste changes, both in the taste of the artwork but also taste of the academics.

HELD: The art historian. I wouldn't call it the taste. The scholarly interest. As soon as artists begin to study the sociological aspects of art, then of course a great many schools assume a certain interest which they never had before. Of course the public is only too willing to follow, because these artists are very easy to understand. First of all, all of them were outstanding technicians. Lord Leighton was really a fabulous technician. Or Bouguereau in a way, too. I mean the taste of some of these artists was perhaps not so great--their own tastes--but their technique was fabulous, and of course they reflected the times. Many of these artists, like Lord Leighton, for instance, who is the-- There's one artist who actually wrote a book on the early Flemish painters. Well, I can't think of the name right now. I have these blocks.

These artists were always very much interested in oriental scenes and African scenes, you know. Not the impressionists, who worked at the same time, but these painters, they painted the Egyptian slave market with naked girls being examined by buyers. You know, this kind of thing. Or they painted harem scenes. That began already with Delacroix, who painted harem scenes. But then these painters usually painted African hunting scenes, and that



sort of thing. Now, by the way, the oil-rich sheiks in the Near East, they collect these paintings, you know, and that contributed also to the rise of the value. But of course these artists in the nineteenth century, they painted these subjects because they lived in an age of colonization. Africa and Asia were colonized by France and Germany and England and so on. So the art historian now can establish an influence of the period of colonization, of the African continent primarily, for instance, but also of southern parts of Asia. They can study how this age is reflected in the works of art.

RIKALA: Yes, it's interesting to see how these fashions change.

HELD: Right now, much of the recent research really is carried on along these lines. I mean, you can even study the German art under the Hitler regime, what is reflected of the Hitler ideology in the works of art of Germany at that time.

RIKALA: Yes, one of the most interesting architectural history books that's out currently is written by Leon Krier, who's not German. He's interested in Albert Speer and the architecture of Albert Speer. Krier himself is an architect. His argument is that you cannot judge the architecture with the politics. He's doing this almost anticontextual look at the architecture, which seems to be



outside of the current stream of historical research. That too is falling under some sort of questioning.

HELD: Well, the bias at the moment is very strong in the direction of establishing a real contact between the historical, the economic, and social and ideological developments of, let's say, nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. The younger scholars go into this very deeply. The problems like connoisseurship and so on, my things, they play absolutely no role with them. Of course when you deal with modern art, it just makes no difference if they sell you Otto Dix or [Oskar] Kokoschka or [Max] Beckmann, and so on. The question of whether the painting is an original or a copy hardly comes up, because we know the paintings are dated and we know quite often the history of each painting. So they are interesting in relationship to the social/economic background.

RIKALA: And perhaps that, too, the social/economic context has so much to do with how we understand our world today that we're using that means of interpretation.

HELD: Certainly. So from that point of view, since I only marginally deal with the subject-- I have not entirely avoided them, but I have not really concentrated on them. To some extent, maybe I'm a little bit of a fossil already in that I still carry on certain work in directions and on problems which are not really at the cutting edge of



contemporary art history. I admit that.

RIKALA: But certainly connoisseurship would never be lost.

HELD: They might say, "Oh, well, connoisseurship is fine, but what does it do? It only helps people making money in the art market." It's not quite correct, but they could use that if they want to denigrate what I'm doing.

You see, I of course still believe in the superiority, let's say, of the talents of artistic genius. The word genius is a dangerous one, and we have to be careful. Do you know Wittgenstein, who declared himself--or was he declared by his friends?--to be the creative genius? But that is pure metaphysics. I still believe that Rembrandt was a genius, you know, and Rubens too, but I know younger scholars avoid that term.

RIKALA: Well, would you consider that Rembrandt and Rubens were hardworking geniuses?

HELD: Well, they also were hardworking, too, but they had a gift from God, so to speak, which not many other artists of the time had. So we should recognize that. In our whole attitude we should be grateful that this special gift really existed and worked and left something behind for us to enjoy and to admire.

RIKALA: The gift is still unapproachable.

HELD: Well, it's unexplainable. You can explain a lot of things with an artist--tradition, choice of subject matter--



but what he makes of it, that is his own. I go a little into this in my study on the Aristotle and on The Polish Rider. There are passages where I say-- Let me see whether-- I say something at the end of The Polish Rider, if I remember. "We have seen all these various elements--" You see, I split up the article into various chapters, and there are seven subdivisions with their own titles. Then I said, "We know about these strands that were woven together in the picture, but how it was done, that is something we'll never understand, we'll never really know. That is the gift of genius." [tape recorder off]

One of the reasons that I wanted to move away from New York was the condition of my wife at that time. It wasn't the Alzheimer's disease, which came later. That happened only five, six years or so after we had moved here. She had had a series of hip operations, and she had to walk for a while with crutches and then at least with a cane. Just in those years, in the late sixties, the situation in New York, especially in the uptown area where we lived, had become rather unsafe, especially for handicapped people. When they saw on the street somebody, a lady who walked along with crutches or with a cane, they just knocked them over and ran away with their handbag. So this was one of the reasons.

Another one, of course, was that I really didn't want to-- I mean, I had retired in 1970, and I had made no effort



to extend my teaching career in New York for another three years, which many people did. I could have easily told the people at Barnard [College] or at Columbia [University], "Why don't I go on to age sixty-eight." I was sixty-five at that time. But I absolutely wanted to stop teaching to have more time for my own work.

Then I thought, "My wife needs to be somewhere else where it's safer, and maybe it's not bad for me to be somewhere else where I have not so many social and cultural obligations." If you have lived a long time in a city like New York--and I had lived there since 1935, '34 even--you have such a circle of people that no matter what you do-- Either you are so rude that you lose your friends, or you make compromises and visit them and go out with them. Then there were of course openings of exhibitions and other things that one feels conscience-bound to see or to do. So I thought, "If you go away, it's a radical change." After the first year or so, we wrote to all the people to whom we had sent Christmas cards and said, "This is the end. We think of you with great affection and love, but it's just too much to carry on such--" I mean, there were two hundred or so Christmas cards I had always to send, and I never sent Christmas cards just with a printed message. I always wrote something personal, and so it was too much. That was just a minor thing, but I'll just mention it. But, of course, I



was very clear in my mind I must go somewhere where a good library is available, because although I have a good many books of my own--

RIKALA: You have an outstanding library of your own.

HELD: Yeah, I have a good library, especially in my own field, but you know for instance all the serials, the--

RIKALA: The journals.

HELD: The journals going back to 1880 or something, I don't have them.

RIKALA: Yes, you can't possibly have them.

HELD: So I vaguely thought of an area around Williamstown, because Williamstown I knew has a good library. Bennington College has nothing that would satisfy me. That summer in 1970 when I retired, 1970, we invited some friends to the farm. We invited them for tea. That must have been sometime in August. I said to them, "I wouldn't mind buying something in this area here." They said to me, "Well, there's a house for sale in Old Bennington." I came over there, and I bought it within two weeks or so. It was just like that. So this is really how I came here.

I had already begun at that time to collect the material for the Rubens oil sketches [book] [The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens], but I knew that I would never finish in New York. My Jordaens book never materialized, and there was a time, of course, where I even



rationalized-- Because Jordaens interested me only in the first twenty years of his career. Later on he really deteriorated as an artist. You don't like to write a book on an artist when all the best things were done while he was still young. With Rubens and Rembrandt, the best things almost come at the end. With Jordaens, it's just the other way around. So I would say whatever spell Jordaens had had waned, anyhow, and besides-- I may have told you about the trouble that another Belgian scholar sort of did what I really had planned to do, so it's all right.

Then I began working on the oil sketches, and by 1978 that book was finished, almost even in '77--I think I added a few things. In 1977, there was the Rubens jubilee. Rubens had been born in 1577, and so it was the four hundredth anniversary of Rubens's birth. Many exhibitions were held and so on, and I was so heartbroken that my book was ready but publication--and especially with a university press, Princeton University Press--just wouldn't go. They had no money, and I had to raise some money. So the book was virtually ready in '77, definitely printable in '78, but it came out only in 1980. I had begun in '68. In '68 wasn't I a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton [University]? [tape recorder off] Institute for Advanced Study, 1967. That is when I began on the Rubens oil sketches. It took me twelve years to finish it. Well,



it came out in '80, but it was finished even in '78. It sounded better twelve years, because the book weighs twelve pounds. I like to say I worked twelve years on that book, a pound a year.

RIKALA: Then around the 1980s you received a renewed Ph.D. from--

HELD: Oh, yeah, yeah, I got-- After fifty years the philosophical faculty of [University of] Freiburg-- It came out of the blue. I mean, years, absolutely out of the blue, a nice document where they renewed my doctorate. You know, I had passed my original doctorate summa cum laude, which is the highest degree, and so they say--it's all in Latin-- "After fifty years of distinguished activity in the field, we renew this doctorate summa cum laude again."

RIKALA: It seems quite unusual.

HELD: I was surprised, but they must have kept records. Fifty years had gone by.

RIKALA: I'm also interested in these symposiums and lectureships in your name. Those must be a great honor too.

HELD: A scholarship fund was assigned-- When I retired from Barnard in 1970, the Julius Held Scholarship Fund. It stands, I think, at \$35,000, and each year a student gets the interest, you know, whatever interest-- Well, it must be, I would say, at least \$2,500. Every year a student in art history gets that thing in my name. A symposium on



Flemish painting was held at the Worcester Art Museum ["Flemish Paintings: Patrons and Collectors, a Symposium in Honor of Julius S. Held," November 19, 1983]. That was '83. Then the Julius Held Lectures are given at Williams. We talked about that. And a symposium was held just last year, 1990, at Columbia ["A Symposium in Honor of Julius S. Held," April 20-21, 1990].

RIKALA: What was that like?

HELD: Well, there were two days. I would say about sixteen papers were read. They had a morning and an afternoon session, and for two days.

RIKALA: And were they Flemish and Dutch?

HELD: No, it could be anything. Could be anything, but most of them were, I think, Flemish and Dutch. John Walsh [Jr.] read a nice paper. Well, then of course I got these awards, honorary doctorate degrees and that kind of thing. This also came out of the blue. I had studied only one term in Heidelberg, my very first term, and never came back. And yet it was Heidelberg that gave me an honorary degree, which in Germany is a much more solemn and perhaps even more honorific thing than in this country. Because in this country if you get an honorary degree, you are usually one out of half a dozen or more people who get it. Every commencement the students get their degrees. At Columbia, for instance, at that time there must have been about ten



people who got an honorary degree, and I was one of ten. In Heidelberg when you get an honorary degree you're the only one, and there's a big fuss made about it. There's music and speeches and so on. I had to make a little speech myself. It was a very solemn affair. And why Heidelberg, I really don't know.

RIKALA: That's very interesting. These awards are fascinating.

HELD: Well, have we not covered now a lot of ground?

RIKALA: I think so. I think we can wrap up for tonight. And thank you very much for your time.



TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

OCTOBER 29, 1992

SMITH: As I was starting to say, as I recall from the earlier sessions, when you first decided to come to the United States, you were not at all certain that you would work as an art historian. I believe you began to study restoration in order to provide yourself with skills. As I thought back on that, it began getting me thinking about what were your perceptions in Germany of the state of scholarship, in general, in the United States and of art historical scholarship, specifically.

HELD: Let me first make a slight correction to what you said. I had planned to study restoration long before I knew that I would come to America. My situation in April of 1933 was simply that I knew that my career in Germany was finished. No Jewish art historian would ever get a job in Germany anymore. My whole development and whole training had been directed towards a museum career. I was thrown out just then, in April, of this training in the Berlin museums. German museums were finished. And of course many younger people-- I was at that time still twenty-eight or twenty-nine. Many younger German scholars, not only art historians but also people in other fields, had to face the question "What shall we do?" Our stay in Germany was clearly limited and hopeless. I mean, we knew that we would probably have



to go. And of course, one thought of all kinds of countries. One very important question that had to be faced by younger people was what language do you really command. Where could you go where you could really converse? Now, I had very little English. My whole training had been in the humanistic Gymnasium. The only living language that I spoke sufficiently well to think that I could go there was French--not even Italian--and so that was number one. What kind of language could you command? Where could you go? Of course, I also could have thought, at that time, of the Netherlands, because while I wouldn't be able to talk Dutch, most people there would understand German and I could learn it.

Then the second question was, well, if you go abroad, what kind of skill should you have in order to make a living? Restoration of works of art was something that might give me some chance of making a living. If I had not the idea of restoration of paintings--because I had always painted and drawn in earlier years--I would have been a baker or a shoemaker or something. A trade. "Learn a trade." That was the constant talk.

Then I started going to the studio of Mr. [Helmut] Ruhemann in Berlin, who had been the restorer at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum. He himself went later to England. In fact, while I was in training, he left Berlin. Then his assistant, the lady who was his assistant, took over that



studio. The whole idea had come to me, of course, not only because of my limited ability to work with my hands but also because I had met, at that time, my future wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held]. I mean, I met her in 1932, and I thought if I studied restoring of paintings and if she would be willing eventually to marry me, of which I was not sure, we could perhaps go together and work together. Well, the trouble was that I was totally untalented in restoring paintings. I made no progress, and it was pretty soon clear to me that that is not the career.

But just after I had made this, then came the idea of going perhaps to America, because I met this man, Mr. [Clarence Y.] Palitz, who had come to get the advice of [Max J.] Friedländer. Friedländer had told him he should ask me. He then asked me several times, and only towards the end of 1933--I can't give you the exact date, but it must have been maybe September or October--he said or wrote to me, "Would you like to try to come to America?"

Now, you asked me what kind of perception I may have had of America. Now, of course I didn't even think much of America as a career in my own field, in art history. I thought, "Maybe I can work with someone in America." Maybe I would go to work with a dealer. Since Mr. Palitz had been buying already one or two pictures at the time--I don't know how many, but not many--maybe through him I might get in



contact with a dealer. Maybe the dealer could employ me to do research for him or whoever. (There were only the men dealers at the time. There weren't many women, so that's why I don't say him or her.) And I did make the acquaintance of some dealers, too, when I came over. You see, I came over at the invitation and with a visit of this man and with a visitor's visa--six months in America--to give me a chance to look around. I used the opportunity, of course, to look around also in museums. It's natural when you come to a country that you've never even thought of being able to see and you know that there are collections. So I looked at the museums. That, in turn, led to getting acquainted with some people at museums in New York, particularly the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. It was then that someone suggested that perhaps I should get a grant--you remember that, probably--from the Carnegie [Foundation]. It's called a scholarship. So I had very little idea of what really went on in America. American scholarship in my field was not very impressive and certainly very little had come to my knowledge.

SMITH: In your field-- You mean Netherlandish paintings?

HELD: Yes. Netherlandish painting from the fifteenth, let's say, through the seventeenth century. There was very, very little that I would have known. I'm not sure that I even knew much about where there were universities where art history was taught. I knew of Harvard [University] because



Paul [J.] Sachs, who was a professor but also a sponsor and a great collector himself, had come to Berlin when I was still working in the museum. He gave a lecture in the organization that is called Kunsthistorische Gesellschaft, or Art Historical Society, in Berlin. He had been invited. In fact, Max Friedländer introduced him and said he was a prominent American art historian. That was while I was still working in the museum. He gave a lecture about American collecting. I don't remember. I remember only one thing, and I may have already mentioned it in my other tape. At the very end, when he was finished with his lecture, he said, "Thank you very much."

SMITH: Yes. You did mention it.

HELD: And, you know, that impressed me, because no German scholar after an end of a lecture would turn to the audience and say, "Thank you very much."

SMITH: Had you heard of Charles Rufus Morey?

HELD: No. Only here. I mean Princeton [University], the Princeton Index [of Christian Art], all this and Charles Rufus Morey I learned only here. I knew virtually nothing. I had had a correspondence-- Yes, that's not in the tape I think. I had looked through the catalog while I was still in Berlin. Of course I had looked at published catalogs, but there were not many. Anyhow, there was a catalog of the Worcester [Art] Museum, and there was one painting there, a



portrait, which interested me very much because I thought I had an idea of who the painter may have been. It didn't turn out the way I had thought, but I wrote a letter to the Worcester Museum and expected that they would send me a bill for the photo. Usually institutes send you bills first for the photograph before they send you the photo. So I wrote to them that they should let me know how much it was. The photo came courtesy of the museum. To me that was unbelievable, because I've asked for photos in many European museums, and they always came with a bill. And the Worcester Museum sent it with the compliments of the director. You see, that was one connection, but it had nothing to do really with American scholarship or anything like this.

At this moment, it's hard for me to remember whether I had an idea of some-- Well, I know that there was one German scholar who was in Wisconsin. What is his name? A German scholar who came over relatively early and was professor at the-- It was in Madison. And of course I also knew of [William R.] Valentiner.

SMITH: Yes.

HELD: You know Valentiner? In fact, one idea that I had when I came to this country, just come to think of it, was that perhaps I ought to also talk to Valentiner. Because I had known of him--I had not ever met him--because he had, by



that time, published two volumes of Rembrandt's drawings in the so-called *Klassiker der Kunst* series. As a student in Berlin, I had taken a seminar on Rembrandt drawings with Hans Kauffmann. The material in which we worked, except for photographs and slides, were the two volumes of Valentiner. And of course everyone knew Valentiner was director in Detroit at the Detroit museum [Institute of Arts]. So when I came to America, I had it in the back of my mind maybe I ought to be able to get in touch with Valentiner. I did get in touch with him somewhat later and I went to Detroit. There was an exhibition of Frans Hals that he had arranged, organized, and I wrote a short review of that exhibition for the Pantheon ["Frans-Hals-Ausstellung in Detroit." Pantheon 15 (1935): 163-66] still in Germany.

You see, I still held a few things to publish in Germany: the review of the Frans Hals exhibition; then two entries for the Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte. "Architekturbild," [Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1 (1937): 905-18] and "Allegorie" [Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1 (1937): 346-66] and then a little article on the so-called Master of the Darmstadt Passion ["Zum Meister der Darmstädter Passion." Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 3 (1934): 53-54], to whom I could attribute an unidentified painting, a little bit. All these things were still published in Germany. Even while I



was here, I sent still a few things over there. In fact, for the Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte, I even wrote two little pieces on Jewish cult objects:

"Chanukkaleuchter" [Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte 3 (1954): 414-15] and another one. So I wrote these here and sent them back. At that time, they still would publish either something by the people exiled or people who had left the country.

But the main problem for me, when I came to this country, was not only to look around for possibilities to find a job but also to learn the language. I mean, I had no English. I had taken a few private lessons in my hometown from a lady who had been a governess in England in her youth, and I had probably read or tried to read some in English books. But I was very limited in my ability to speak the language. Of course, that was one of the main concerns, and then this again became a major problem for me in this country when I actually then began to teach. You know, that began, of course, much later. I came in January '34. My first teaching assignment began in September '35.

SMITH: That was at the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University]?

HELD: The New York Institute.

SMITH: And you had to teach in English?



HELD: Oh, yes. Yes. Absolutely.

SMITH: You know that at Yale [University] [Henri] Focillon and [Marcel] Aubert were teaching in French.

HELD: I know. I know. Yeah. I presume people could assume that there were enough young people who could understand French, but there were very few-- In fact, even much later, German was still a very little practiced language in colleges and universities. That's probably the result of the war. There was a certain reluctance.

SMITH: When you came to the Institute, you were only a part-time teacher.

HELD: Yeah. One course each term.

SMITH: Did you have much interaction with [Erwin] Panofsky or [Walter] Friedlaender?

HELD: Panofsky was not in New York. He was in Princeton. Walter Friedlaender of course I knew even from Germany. Walter Friedlaender had been professor in Freiburg. When I was a student, I took a seminar on Caravaggio with Walter Friedlaender. I think even--I don't know--at that time he was rather interested in Milanese painting of the sixteenth century. I remember either a lecture by him or maybe a course on Italian mannerism, but I had a course with him on Caravaggio. But Friedlaender, Walter Friedlaender-- We were acquainted and we talked to each other and all of that, but there had not been much later contact between him and me. I



think it came about there was something that carried over from the time when I was a student in Freiburg, because I was a student of [Hans] Jantzen when he was in Freiburg. He probably could not forget that I had not really been his student. University professors, especially in small universities-- There was a clear distinction. There was not much warmth between Freidlaender and Jantzen. Freidlaender considered me-- "Well, he's a renegade" or that "He's Jantzen's follower." I had a feeling that there was a certain coolness even when I came over here, because he could not forget that I had not worked with him.

SMITH: What about Karl Lehmann?

HELD: Well, Lehmann, I never had known before. Absolutely not. In fact, when Lehmann came, I more or less had already left. I'm not quite sure about the dates at this moment. I was very close to Weinberger. Martin Weinberger. He was interested in Dürer, and you know my dissertation was involved with Dürer. For many reasons, Weinberger and his wife were probably the people closest to me among the group that taught at NYU [New York University]. [Guido] Schönberger came a little later, but we had very little in common. I mean, we were well acquainted and friendly but nothing really creatively.

SMITH: I know he wasn't an émigré, but what about [Richard] Offner?



HELD: Offner? Offner, yes. I took a course with him, or rather-- I mean, it's not quite the right word. He permitted me to sit in on a seminar on trecento painting. He advised me many times, so that was a very nice relationship. I've never heard him speak German. He probably was quite fluent in German, I would think. Do you know?

SMITH: I know that he spoke German, but--

HELD: He never did with me. No. And, of course, I had recommendations. You see, I came over with some recommendations. You know from the other tape that I had one to [Albert] Barnes.

SMITH: Oh, right. Yes.

HELD: Wasn't that in that tape? Dean [George] Koyl and all that. That's in there. I had a recommendation from [Max J.] Friedländer to Barnes. I probably had one to Valentiner also, but I didn't go immediately there. Walter Cook was of course the man who was most active in helping younger refugees--younger and older too.

SMITH: Well, I get the impression that he was not taken seriously intellectually.

HELD: No. No. I quite often sat in. Of course, that's what I did in order to learn the language: I tried to sit in in as many seminars or lecture courses as possible. In addition to that, I, by the way, went constantly to movies,



because I thought I'd learn the language when I see a picture and speaking it. I did go to Walter Cook's course a few times, not regularly, on Spanish. Spanish, that was his field. But I don't think that the work that he had done made a real contribution to the history of Spanish art. It's not my field, and I have not read any of the things. Already the kind of lecture course that he gave made it clear to me that he hadn't really much to say, because he showed about three hundred slides in one hour. You know, something like this. It's like a tour, and people talked about "Cook's tour." [laughter] Later on, when I taught myself, I sometimes could talk half an hour about one slide.

SMITH: To get a sense of a national comparison, would there be professors in Germany who might be similar to Cook?

Using many, many slides?

HELD: No. No. A professor at a university in Germany had to establish the seriousness of his scholarship with penetrating quality of work. Exploring, let's say, works of art or the development of an individual artist or chronologies or iconographies or whatever, but there's always dealing with problems. But Cook showed us when you go up to the Alhambra, you first see this on your left side and then you see that on your right side, and so on. This kind of thing. But he's a wonderful human being.

Unfortunately he drank too much. [laughter]



SMITH: How much teaching had you done in Germany?

HELD: No formal teaching at all. I gave lectures in the Berlin museums, which was part of my duty as a voluntary assistant.

SMITH: Did you teach seminars?

HELD: No, I didn't. No. I did no teaching. Teaching was never even in the back of my mind when I started art history because I was clearly going for the administration of museums. The fact that later on I was in a situation where I really could contribute something to the formation of a museum was an exceptional stroke of good luck: the [Museo de Arte de] Ponce Museum. The things that I had planned when I studied the field-- And then I worked for two years in the museums in Berlin. You know that?

SMITH: Yes.

HELD: Of course, I had a real straight line up the museum's ladder.

SMITH: Let me ask you then--and you can answer this question also in relationship to your work at Barnard [College] and Columbia [University]--as you began to deal with developing courses in the American system, how did you adapt what you had learned in Germany to a different institutional basis and maybe a different set of social relations?

HELD: Well, you have to distinguish in an American system



between lecture courses and seminars. There was, of course, the same thing in Germany, although the lecture courses in Germany were, in their aim, closer to the ideal of the seminar: that is, presenting problems if you had them and solutions and so on. Whereas here, especially on the undergraduate level with which I began at Barnard--of course, not at NYU--I realized very soon that I had to give a kind of survey, you know, that they were called "survey courses." In those courses you couldn't deal with real art historian problems, as you had to, perhaps, give them a concept of the framework--historical and political--in which certain developments grew and who the artists were who had contributed. It's like a handbook. You know, you sort of have to lecture in the form of a handbook.

But when I began, of course, at NYU, the situation was somewhat different. Not very much, because even then, in the courses that I gave for Walter Cook, which were always in the field of Netherlandish art, either Dutch painting or Flemish painting or Rembrandt-- There I had usually a relatively limited group of students. The lecture courses may have had thirty students in them and seminars maybe ten--even fewer than that. There I realized, of course, that the background even of the graduate students at NYU was not even on the level of the undergraduate students in Germany--what you call an undergraduate in early semesters. They had come



to NYU from colleges where they had perhaps one introductory course in art history, and here they were then taking what we called "seminars." They were very intelligent young people, but they had no background. They had absolutely no knowledge, especially of the areas that were in my field of relative competence: that is, Netherlandish and German art, German medieval art, German nineteenth-century art. I remember that I once spoke about Caspar David Friedrich and one student said, "Oh, well, isn't that kind of romantic trash or something?" The word baroque was still, for these students, a negative term, as it had been, of course, for a long time. Somehow many students came and felt that the whole course of the baroque period was sort of a period of decay.

So, now, the survey courses at NYU on Netherlandish art-- They were, by the way, given usually in the Metropolitan Museum. The courses were physically given in the Metropolitan Museum. Of course, there were not only the NYU students, who were never more than a handful, but quite often there were people from the Metropolitan Museum, people who worked in the various departments, who sat in and picked up some additional information about history of art from whoever was there. And, of course, many fine people taught in these courses at NYU. Lecture courses were never given at the Institute because the Institute had only an apartment



on-- I don't know. Was it Eightieth Street or something? It was a private house, and it was only on the ground floor, and the only area where anything could be given was the office of the individual teacher. Offner, for instance, gave his seminars on trecento painting in his own office. So all the lecture courses were given at the Metropolitan Museum. The staff at that time, for instance, had a member, [Rudolf] Meyer Riefstahl-- Have you ever come across the name?

HELD: No.

SMITH: He was a member of the staff of NYU, and he gave lecture courses also in the Metropolitan Museum. Who taught at the same time? There was a man [Alfred] Salmony. Have you heard of him?

SMITH: No.

HELD: These were all people who taught-- They died, of course, long ago. Meyer Riefstahl was of German origin, but had long been over here. He was an old American, and I think he taught Near Eastern art if I remember correctly. And Salmony was a specialist for Asiatic, Chinese art. I think he was a well-respected scholar. Those were the people who taught. Later on, Charles Sterling was over here. He talked English very well but he came much later, and he was one of my best friends. He died only a short while ago. You know, have you heard of him?



SMITH: Yes.

HELD: Charles Sterling. He taught at NYU, but after I had left. Of course, by that time, there were already some younger people teaching there. Harry Bober, for instance, began teaching. Oh, yes. Wait a minute. Frankl. Paul Frankl had come over and he taught some at NYU. But Frankl had a real problem with English. I remember that he asked me at one time to sit in and help him out with words when he needed--

SMITH: I have a more sort of general question, which is-- When you talk about the survey course, it does fit in with where American education had been coming from, which was the sense of developing a humanistic attitude for people who would not stay in university but who would be in the world at large--the leaders of American society. So in a sense, a general introduction was how education was conceived.

HELD: The idea of the college, liberal arts college, is a branch of education that prepares people to lead cultured lives, surely. That shaped, of course, also the kind of course that you would give. But you must remember that each lecture course, at least at our institution at Barnard-- The classes were very large; I sometimes had way over a hundred students in these lecture courses. But then you broke down the class into smaller groups, and usually the system was that two hours each week would be lecture and the third hour



would be a kind of seminar in smaller discussion groups.

Yes.

SMITH: Did you participate in those?

HELD: I did. Yes. Yes, I did that. I think probably in all my courses, the third hour I taught, but quite often, especially later on when I was more ahead--let's say in a little elevated position--the reading of papers quite often was then assigned to assistants. I tried to control to some extent what the assistants did with those papers, especially every once in a while I would see what they gave. I mean an A or a C or a D. I would see whether the judgment of my assistants would be reliable. It's a problem. I didn't like to hand out that kind of work to somebody else, but it was just impossible.

SMITH: That's part of the American system.

HELD: You couldn't do it otherwise.

SMITH: But if we look at the American college having a sort of self-defined, liberal arts, humanistic approach, in Germany it seems to me the more operative word, the key word, is wissenschaftliche.

HELD: Yeah. Do you see, that was completely novel to me, that at an institution that I had first thought was a kind of university level, the education was really so broad and so shallow at the same time. But I also learned something that was very valuable for myself, because I also, when I



came over and had to teach these large survey courses, became aware of the enormous gaps in my own knowledge. I had gone into university and had very quickly special-- Let's begin first that I had graduated from high school, but the high school had not really prepared me for art history. Well, there's almost nothing in German high school where I learned something. I learned more about art history because of some books that my father [Adolf Held] had given me or a friend who was a painter and that kind of thing. Then when I went to university, I immediately was thrown into the German university scheme of taking seminar courses, and of course there were also lecture courses. But even those lecture courses were, as we said before, on a very scholarly level. But when I then had to teach, myself, survey courses--let's say from Giotto to Tintoretto or something like this--I suddenly realized how little I knew of the large trends of art history or the large problems. I knew very little in Germany, let's say, of the difference between Florentine and Sienese art in the trecento.

SMITH: Really?

HELD: Yeah. But of course, unless I had read books about it, there had been no courses that would have informed me. The courses were very specialized. There was one course-- I think I mentioned the man, [Edmund] Hildebrandt, who was also not really a man very much recognized as a scholar but



he had some interesting-- He compared pictures with each other and tried to give us an idea of the distinction between one type of hand and another type, let's say comparing Luca della Robbia with Donatello. So this kind of going back and forth and examining these things was very stimulating, but it didn't tell me much about quattrocentro sculpture in Florence or Venice or whatever, you know.

I had known virtually nothing of Byzantine art. You remember that I took a course, a seminar, with Morey, and he said I had to read a paper? I had to read one on Kariye Camii, mosaics in Constantinople. I had to work myself into an entire history of an important branch of art of which I had really learned nothing before. The gaps-- I was sometimes mortified. I became aware of the enormous gaps in my own knowledge. So the teaching of undergraduate courses was very, very helpful to me because I became acquainted with a huge body of material that I had to become acquainted with and think about and think about the problems that I had really not been trained to consider before.

SMITH: So the wissenschaftliche tradition focused everyone, from the beginning, on defining very sharp problems.

HELD: I took a number of lecture courses in Berlin or in Freiburg, but they were always very limited. A survey was something that you acquired yourself if you read the book. I had to, for instance, read for my doctoral examination the



book by Paul Frankl on Romanesque architecture [Baukunst des Mittelalters]. I had never done it before because there was no course which had asked me to look into a special problem. But in the doctoral examination, you had to pick a number of areas in which you were supposed to have a general survey. It happened that you acquired that survey just by reading important books. It was not taught that way. I knew that I would be questioned about medieval architecture in my doctoral examination because Jantzen, as you probably know, was interested in Gothic architecture. I knew it was most likely that he would ask me questions about a field that interested him, so I prepared myself for reading everything that I could get ahold of about the general history of medieval architecture and especially Romanesque. About Gothic I knew a little more because I had studied with Jantzen in Freiburg, but about Romanesque I didn't know much. I found Frankl's book very stimulating and interesting. I had to take an exam in archaeology, classical archaeology, and in history. And I knew my examiner would be Professor Ritter in Freiburg. I had to read, then, European history from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. So when I was finished with university, I saw there were some areas where I had a broad survey. I think I had it in the Netherlands, but there were still large areas in French art and in Italian art and so on



where there are still large blanks in my map.

SMITH: Then you went to Barnard and Columbia. What were your impressions as you began to get involved with planning the major and the course offerings? By that time you had become convinced of the necessity of having survey courses?

HELD: No. Well, I simply had to do what was expected of me. I found the survey courses, especially in the beginning, important and interesting to me because they forced me to fill in those gaps. And to some extent, that process went on for quite a while. But I also realized that they didn't serve what you might call real scholarly ends. They served, given the students, to stimulate their interests in an area that might be useful later. Now, I did something-- I think it's of some importance perhaps in this connection. I myself already began to collect works of art. And I tried to stimulate my students to do that, too. So by creating an interest, an aesthetic interest and aesthetic understanding of works of art, I also had always in mind that maybe these people will do something with that in their own lives.



TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO

OCTOBER 29, 1992

HELD: Several of my students started collecting.

SMITH: You discussed that earlier.

HELD: Did I say Mrs. [Virginia] Wright in Seattle? She's one of the great collectors of the West Coast.

SMITH: No. I don't think you mentioned her. I'd like to skip ahead to '56 when Rudolf Wittkower comes to Columbia. It's my understanding that when Wittkower came to Columbia, it was to reorganize the department, to reorient it and put it on a new basis. I wonder if you could characterize what the nature of the department had been like before Wittkower and the kinds of changes he made.

HELD: Well, I don't think that he made any changes, any really basic changes, in the educational program. He brought in a number of younger people who brought some fresh ideas and perhaps also new enthusiasm into the field. But the way I see it now, in retrospect, is that his stewardship reestablished the morale of the department. The morale had sort of broken down. There was acrimony, rivalry, and all kinds of things that were unpleasant. We had then, for two years, the stewardship of Albert Hofstadter, whose name I think I put into the old text. Then Wittkower came, and he had this wonderful ability to put everyone at ease, you know. It was a touch of calmness and ease, friendliness and



easygoingness, which helped the department greatly.

Then there were, as I said, younger people. I mentioned some of them. Unfortunately, you know that it was very pathetic or tragic that this young group of scholars that Wittkower really had developed and brought in, many of them died young. There's a whole group of them who died. There was another meeting at the College Art Association [of America] where I made reference-- Milton J. Lewine was one of them, the man who wrote a book on Bernini. Well, there were three young people who had taken courses with Wittkower whom he hired then also and they took over the-- You know that Columbia had started at that time, before Wittkower came, an undergraduate program. I don't know what they called it. You give them the acquaintance of the peaks of human civilizations in an undergraduate course, given in sections by all the major departments. Art history gave a course that taught about the Acropolis, then about the medieval cathedral, then, I don't know, maybe the baroque, and so on. And then there were great works of literature and so on. It's like the Great Books kind of thing.

SMITH: Yes. It was very prominent.

HELD: It wasn't really called "Great Books" because they were art, but it had a special title. That had been started before Wittkower came. In fact, [Everard M.] Upjohn and [Paul S.] Wingert and Mrs. [Jane Gaston] Mahler, the people



who also then published a book on the history of art [History of World Art], a general introduction, they were the ones who controlled that Columbia undergraduate course. And there was--I think I mentioned this already--a feeling that this group of people-- I mean, their concept of scholarship was more the traditional one of broad surveys and not really penetrating research. In fact, I don't know that the people who taught those courses made a name for themselves as scholars who did original research. Maybe I do them an injustice, but, in general, the impression was-- And this is something that I already said before in the other tape. There was a split before Wittkower came between the camps. I mean, the most prominent people who were antagonistic to each other were Meyer Schapiro and Upjohn, and to such an extent that they almost didn't talk to each other. Hofstadter, during those two years, managed that things were carried on, but it was a bad situation. Wittkower had a gift to really reestablish again a decent, collegial relationship within the department. Yeah, my own boss, so to speak, Marion Lawrence, belonged to that other side. She belonged to the Upjohn--

SMITH: The Upjohn side.

HELD: Yes. She was a representative of the Princeton school. She was a great admirer and perhaps at one time also a pupil of Morey. All her life, she worked on the



catalog of the city-gate sarcophagi. It's a kind of sarcophagus--classical--that has formed city gates. The city-gate sarcophagus. She collected that material, you know, in the typical American way of collecting material. Trying to get as much of everything together. The tragedy is that she was probably the greatest living connoisseur of city-gate sarcophagi but her work never was finished. I mean, she died. She died even before that whole thing was ever published. But she collected the material and described it and so on. I never talked to her, and we had no real exchange between scholars. I mean, she was my boss. She hired me and she extended my appointments from year to year, but we never talked about anything like this. So I have no idea what problems she really tried to follow up, what the problem was with city-gate sarcophagi. Of course, I could think now it could have been chronology--how to date them--or functionally, what function they might have had, how it related to early Christianity, and so on. There are problems surely involved, but I have no idea what she really was after.

SMITH: Perhaps she felt first you have to collect and then the problems will become clear.

HELD: Yeah. I guess so. Yeah.

SMITH: You had mentioned earlier today that in the course of your career, you changed your opinion on the Warburg



tradition.

HELD: Well, not on the Warburg. I changed my opinion on what you might call the problems of art history. I don't have to tell you what the Warburg Institute stands for, you know: the classical tradition, the iconographical problems, and so on. My whole training--I come back to the beginning of this tape--was really looking at the museums and becoming a curator of museums, to work with individual works of art, to place them within the context of the larger art history, to be able to distinguish between copies and originals, to be able to judge the quality and the state of preservation of a work of art, to think of specific problems of cataloging, exhibiting works of art, and so on. In other words, I had not felt, while I studied in Germany, that I had these gaps in my knowledge which became so obvious to me when I came over here. Of course, among those gaps was also iconological studies. Panofsky, his first book was Studies in Iconology: [Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance], although he later once told me that he probably should have simply called it Iconography. But anyhow, this had also not entered into the area of my awareness and consciousness of problems in art history.

So it was this that when I came over here and had to give courses on the broader level-- I became aware, of course, also of the great importance of what had been done



in the Warburg Institute. I began reading much more. I mean, I can't say that I had been totally unaware of it. But I had not really given much attention to it. So I suddenly realized that in my own field I could make some researches along lines in which I applied some of the ideas which the Warburg people--let's say Panofsky and [Charles de] Tolnay and [Edgar] Wind and Otto Kurz and [Ernst] Gombrich--had done.

By the way, Kurz and Gombrich had been students in Vienna when I was a student there. I knew them when they were still working courses at the Schlosser Institute in Vienna. You know, in Vienna, I don't know whether I mentioned that I studied in the department, the area, where Schlosser was the head, Julius von Schlosser. Is he mentioned in the--?

SMITH: I don't recall that.

HELD: Do you know who he was? He had written a book, The History of Art History. A wonderful man. A great scholar. In Vienna, there had been a tradition which had some context with what you might call the "Warburg circle," namely the-- You know the book Kunstgeschichte als geistesgeschichte? Have you ever heard of it? There was a professor in Vienna [Max Dvorak], in the Schlosser department, who had tried to study art history in terms of the history of ideas, which of course other people have done later, too. So knowing the



Viennese branch of, let's say, a broader concept of art history than pure stylistic and material-- That had already influenced me. And there were other younger people there at the time in Vienna, younger scholars who had followed the line. Then I became acquainted much more closely with the people. You know Wind was over here too; Edgar Wind came to this country also. I had nice contacts with him, and I had even, on one of my trips to Europe, spent a whole evening with him talking about my problems. He was at the Warburg Institute--when he was still at the Warburg--on one of my trips before the Second World War. Then I read Panofsky's books and so on. I don't think I was ever a full-fledged Warburgian. In that text that you said you have read there is a reference to me. There's a kind of marginal or whatever-- I don't know what they called it. I think some of my studies-- Let's say the article on Flora, the iconography of Flora ["Flora, Goddess and Courtesan." In Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky, edited by Millard Meiss (1961)] I would call a typical Warburgian study, to some extent, perhaps the Aristotle also. When I gave the article on Aristotle as a lecture in Princeton, Panofsky virtually embraced me afterward and said that, "Julius, that was one of the best lectures I ever heard" or something like this. Maybe you'd call me a fringe Warburgian.

SMITH: When you get to the specifics of Netherlandish painting or Rubens, how does the Warburg tradition assist



one?

HELD: Well, I first of all realized the importance of the themes. You see, before that, in the tradition of, let's say, the Berlin history of art under Adolph Goldschmidt and Kauffmann and so on, or Freiburg with Jantzen, the problem of the iconography and the relationship of iconography to the tradition of image making and to religion or philosophy, or whatever, had not been really stressed. Much more important for us was the authenticity and the dating and so on and the style. So with Rubens, of course, questions of authenticity and style and so on were there and I had dealt with them. I think I was competent to deal with them. But I went much further afield in terms of iconographic traditions, meaning the relationship to the sources, to whatever classical or Renaissance sources they had and so on. So I think the breadth in which I dealt with the works of Rubens in my book--I hope I can say this--was made possible only by becoming aware of a branch of art history that had played a very limited role for me in Germany when I grew up.

SMITH: In terms of your graduate students, your disser-tators, how did you balance questions of connoisseurship, iconography, morphology--?

HELD: I tried to do it.

SMITH: I mean, would you push people in any particular direction?



HELD: I can't really-- I don't know how to answer that. I don't think that I ever had a seminar exclusively on iconographical problems. Let's say I could have taught, perhaps, a seminar on the role that Ovid's Metamorphoses played in the history of Renaissance and baroque art. I could have done that, but I didn't. So I don't think that I was a strong propagandist. Being, as I said, a fringe Warburgian, I probably did not push that particularly.

SMITH: Well, let's say that you have a graduate student, a dissertator, let's say John Walsh [Jr.]. Would you say to him, "You need to consider iconographical questions"?

HELD: Well, you know, his dissertation was on the oeuvre of Porcellis. In fact, that is a topic that he got in Holland. Since you bring this up, it's rather funny, because I had suggested when he talked with me what kind of dissertation-- He wanted to do it in the Dutch field, and my idea was he should perhaps look into the idea of humor in Dutch painting. I think when he went to Europe he thought that he would go into this. I don't know whether anyone has dealt with it, but it's still a valuable subject that has iconographical, sociological, and all kinds of ramifications. Humor. And that is what I had in mind. But he let me know that people in Holland-- He took courses then in Utrecht or in Amsterdam, I don't remember now. He wrote to me that they talked him out of it. That they suggested



perhaps he should write the dissertation on Porcellis, which is an oeuvre catalog, a traditional oeuvre catalog, questions of authenticity and so on. It is the kind of thing that I might have done in Germany myself, you know. I felt that perhaps some broader ideological topic would be nicer, but the Dutch scholars just--

SMITH: You had been Americanized.

HELD: --talked him out of it, and it came back into a very fine, straightforward monograph on this painter of seascapes.

SMITH: What about patronage studies? How deeply did you push your students?

HELD: In the Rubens field I had to, of course. The role of Archduke Ferdinand or Isabella Clara Eugenia-- When I wrote my piece on the Aristotle, I had to deal, of course, with the relationship of Rembrandt and Ruffo in Sicily. But that was a study where I had to simply develop my theme in terms of documents, original documents, letters and so on and correspondence that was available. I did not make an extended survey of patronage per se in Flemish art or Dutch art or so.

SMITH: Were there students of yours that you felt that in order for them to do what they needed or what they were setting out to do, they had to dig more deeply into patronage?



HELD: You know that I had not many doctoral students who went with me for a doctorate degree. Surely they wrote topics that I gave them for seminar papers. They could range all over, including this kind of question too. But a study for a higher degree along [inaudible] lines, that I don't remember. In fact, there are not many students who went on to work with me beyond the master's degree or so. But I remember, I think, the problems that I did push them into were studies of iconography. That I think I always did in my seminars. I remember one: Mrs. [Madlyn M.] Kahr, who was a graduate student of mine at Columbia. She later wrote quite a number of articles on Rembrandt. Either she or somebody else I pushed into or gave as a topic "Rembrandt's classical themes," Lucretia and so on.

Those are things that I was very much interested in. My paper on Aristotle itself is, of course, a study of the absorption of the classical theme as applied to one particular group of pictures. It was not only the Aristotle--it was Aristotle and Homer and Alexander which Ruffo wanted. These I studied not only in relationship to the patron--the patron who wanted to have certain types of pictures--but also what the sources for Rembrandt were, what it meant in Rembrandt's own oeuvre to deal with these subjects. What did he try to bring out? How close to the classical subject? How close to the personal experience of



the artist himself? Well, it's an involved and complicated relationship, and I tried to explore every direction that opened up there. Every question that you would want to field, one should follow.

SMITH: I'd like to shift a little bit. One person who's very important in the field of art history and you were a colleague of was Meyer Schapiro. What is the place of Meyer Schapiro in the development of the art history discipline? What is it, specifically, that Schapiro has contributed to the discipline that no one else has? Is there a school of Schapiro as you can say there's a Warburg tradition?

HELD: It's funny that when I think of Schapiro I think of the extraordinary range and the perceptiveness of him as an individual. I don't really quite see him as a head of a school. I don't know. Maybe there is none. I would think there's more of a Wittkower school than a Schapiro school. But maybe Schapiro is such an extraordinary individual and gifted and amazing man that you would have to be a second Schapiro to be really continuing what he's done, his line.

SMITH: He was one of the earlier people to get involved with semiotics and semiology.

HELD: But that came relatively late. When did it begin? Twenty-five or thirty years ago? Not longer than that. I remember that I had a conversation with him once where he said, "This is semiotics. That's the new line." And he



wrote one of the early articles, a seminal article, a semiotical article on art history. Did he really do much later in semiotics?

SMITH: Well, he hasn't published all that much, as you know.

HELD: I don't know. He was convinced-- He was one of the early ones who felt that it can make an interesting contribution in art history. But I associate him much more with-- Rather than bringing one formula, I think I should pick out a few things that I remember of him distinctly. For instance, he opened my eyes to the significance of French impressionism in a particular way, because I had thought of impressionism as a--let's say--technical thing: a certain way of handling pigments, handling brushwork, and so on. Light. You know, a different approach to rendering impressions from nature and transforming them in a particular way. When I heard him--I sat in in some of his classes--he talked about vacation art: the impressionists show people at leisure. You don't see many people working, you know. They travel by train. They go to the country. They sit in gardens, you know. They are boating or dance in beer gardens, making conversation. Leisure. Leisured society. And he's linked that, of course, to the French bourgeoisie, the nineteenth-century Parisian scene and so on.



So you need to see the ramifications of this approach which takes away from the style of the French painters to the themes that they deal with and the society which they depict, you know. This is something, of course, that had an influence on others, but whenever I read any such study now that you might call a Schapirian kind of approach, I only see the enormous difference in perceptiveness of the people who tried to apply his method and his approach and how less meaningful they seem to me than what he has really brought out.

SMITH: Is that because they're arguing a specific ideology?

HELD: I think some of the imitators--let's say not followers, but imitators of Schapiro--are more ideological than he ever was, you know. They have-- Not a chip on the shoulder, but they have some kind of case to make, political or whatever. I think of one particular case, but it doesn't really matter. When I feel that it is Schapiro--the influence of Schapiro--made towards almost political ends, you know, to make a point politically, other than from a scholarly point of view-- Then one of his early studies was on the Master of Flemalle. You know the triptych. He read the medieval theology. Do you know that particular study the--?

SMITH: The piece that is in the Cloisters.

HELD: Yeah. The mousetrap, the mousetrap triptych. Well,



you see, this was a wonderful opening up of doors again. Of course, he buttressed it with reading a French theologian, to find the relationship in-- The explanation for a very strange detail, he found that through reading contemporary or slightly earlier theological discussions. So the breadth of his reading, of his knowledge of cultural and religious theological traditions, was always amazing. You see, it's hard to think that this can be--maybe I'm not quite just in it--transmitted in the school, you know. He can tell people that one should not omit looking into *raison d'etre*, but the originality of his thinking and of his researching is just unique. I find it admirable, but you have to have a very special gift and intelligence to do it.

SMITH: He was, of course, also a leading proponent of the contemporary art.

HELD: Yes. You know I shared an office with him, and many times people came. Young painters or established painters came to visit him. I remember there was a time when he had a lot of contact with Léger, who came to New York. Yes. This was all quite wonderful.

SMITH: I felt that earlier not enough attention-- Well, we need to give some attention to your impressions of abstract expressionism. There you were in New York in the midst of all this development and all this hoopla. Did you pay any attention to--?



HELD: I had a hard time with abstract expressionism at first. [laughter] I must really say that I was interested in what went on but I had-- When I came to this country, I became aware of the painting of the, let's say, WPA [Works Progress Administration] period, you know. The American art that I didn't know at all-- And you never asked me about this, but now we come to it. What did I know about American art?

SMITH: I assumed nothing, actually.

HELD: Virtually nothing. And of course I discovered for myself Winslow Homer and Eakins and Ryder and so on, this nineteenth-century group. You know that I once owned Eakins's drawings.

SMITH: Yes.

HELD: You know that. Because I admired him so, when I saw the chance that there was-- Anyhow, and then I became interested in American art of the 1930s and early forties.

SMITH: Like [Charles] Demuth or [Charles] Sheeler.

HELD: Yes. Yes.

SMITH: How about [Milton] Avery and--?

HELD: All these artists. I was interested in them. And that was at that time the modern art in America. I bought a little picture. Didn't you see that the other day? The painting that I have here of one of the younger painters of that period.

SMITH: The goggles.



HELD: The goggles. Yeah. You see, that was a young contemporary painter.

SMITH: Was that of the--?

HELD: That was in 1941. You know, the painting's dated '41, and I bought it out of one of his exhibitions.

SMITH: And the artist?

HELD: Well, we can look it up again. I can't think.

[Joseph Hirsch] And then there were others like this.

There was [Jack] Levine, one of these younger artists.

There was also Mervin Jules. I mean, that may not mean anything.

SMITH: No. It doesn't.

HELD: Well, they all were forgotten and so on. Then I lent--

SMITH: Well, Jack Levine is still very well known.

HELD: But he was then a young artist. These were the artists that I took some interest in. And coming from them were artists who were rather associated with the social scene. Who was the man who painted Jewish themes at that time?

SMITH: Well, Ben Shahn.

HELD: Shahn. Yes. Yes.

SMITH: Max Weber.

HELD: Yeah. This whole group, you see. I took a great deal of interest in that. And then when the first Pollock came--Jackson Pollock--I had a hard time seeing much merit



in that.

SMITH: Did you and Schapiro discuss this?

HELD: Well, we might have. I may have asked him about it because I knew that he was interested in it. We may have. Well, we may have talked, but it would have been in the forties. Was it late forties, perhaps?

SMITH: Mid to late forties, right?

HELD: Mid to late forties, yeah. I'm sure that the topic came up, because we were close and for many years we shared the same office. But I don't know. I can't even say that I made a real personal effort to become more closely associated or understand what went on.

SMITH: When you were developing the museum at Ponce, how modern did you get? How contemporary did you go?

HELD: First of all, the whole relationship was helping this man [Luis Ferré] to establish a kind of museum that has a broad range. And I was aware--and this is rather important in view of your question--that there was an important modern, contemporary school. Some are already quite abstract in Puerto Rico. I told Luis Ferré, "You should support and cultivate young painters in Puerto Rico." There was no point in persuading him to buy American abstract expressionist painting, because he had, of course, contemporary young people there and, as a man who spends a lot of money for old masters, would open himself up to



considerable criticism if he would not have also an eye for young, modern art. I myself once bought a watercolor from one of these young Puerto Rican artists, which I still own. I told him that, "You should really further and help these young artists." So he has now one section of the museum-- which does not appear, I think, in the catalog--of young Puerto Rican, and now he added occasionally also Mexican [artists] and so on. I stimulated him and pushed him also in that direction. He felt the obligation to further contemporary Latin American art and not the conventional art, not the traditional one, but also the experimental and modern. So he did that. Occasionally there are fallbacks. He got one painting-- It was given to him. I said to him if he wanted me to come again, get rid of that, you know-- It was a contemporary, but it was bad.

Now, I also did the same thing in Canada. You know that I traveled fairly often, in the forties, to Canada. I looked around there for contemporary art there and I bought--

SMITH: Where was this? At Toronto? Ottawa?

HELD: Toronto and Ottawa. At one of my lectures to the Maritime Provinces, I remember that I looked up a young Canadian painter of whom I'd seen things in Ottawa and I bought a watercolor from him, the young Canadian artist. Now, he was not abstract, but he was a very fine-- You know,



there was a Group of Seven, the so-called Canadian group  
of-- I think there were seven painters.

SMITH: I don't know much about Canadian work. I know Serge  
Guilbaut has a book about the abstract painters of Montreal  
in the post-World War II period.

HELD: Ever heard of [Jean-Paul] Riopelle? He was one of  
those painters.



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SMITH: You were mentioning about Canada?

HELD: That in the Group of Seven, a Toronto-based group of painters, A. Y. [Alexander Young] Jackson was one of the names. They had flourished, let's say, in between 1910 and 1940, sort of a group. But then there were younger artists in Canada also. And I remember that I talked to the people in Ottawa. Harry McCurry, who was then director [of the National Gallery of Canada], was looking into and supporting young artists. So this was always in my mind, and I occasionally bought things. But I must say I didn't buy any-thing at what you might call the edge-- What is the expression?

SMITH: The cutting edge?

HELD: The cutting edge of the development. So, as I told before--and I see nothing really to deny it--I had a difficult time to make my peace with abstract expressionism.

SMITH: How about pop art?

HELD: Pop art, even today I make no-- Op art had a little more interest to me because of its geometric and scientific qualities. But pop art [inaudible]. [laughter]

SMITH: What about postpainterly abstraction?

HELD: The what?

SMITH: Postpainterly abstraction?



HELD: Do you mean hard-edged things?

SMITH: Hard-edge. Right.

HELD: Hard-edge things. Yes. Well, I-- Yeah, I was interested-- I used to go to the Museum of Modern Art and look at these things.

SMITH: Would you go to the contemporary galleries down in the Village [Greenwich Village] or--?

HELD: No. No. There were just so many things that you could do, you know. I had a heavy teaching schedule. I had children that grew up. I had the correspondence. I was pretty much in demand as an expert in-- People came to me and asked my opinion on things. I wanted to write. I had a program of publication. I had the museum in Ponce [Museo de Arte de Ponce]. And then to go around to look at the exhibitions at Soho and the Lower East Side and so on, what went on, that was just beyond what I could do. Then don't forget that it's already now twenty-two years that I left New York.

SMITH: Of course, one of the things when we were talking about [Meyer] Schapiro and the kinds of analysis that Schapiro did with the Master of Flemalle-- There's another trend in art history which was morphological, formalistic, which says let's not investigate, get caught up with, sociological irrelevancies. Let's look at the object as an object.

HELD: Well, first of all, I don't know whether that should



be-- Is the criticism valid of Schapiro? I have a feeling he considered the object also from what you called a "morphological" point of view. I don't really know. I haven't come across much the morphology that you're talking now about. Can you explain? Give me an example where traditional art history does not permit this kind of approach.

SMITH: Well, actually I was thinking of the Yale [University]-- That's the [Henri] Focillon--

HELD: Oh, Focillon.

SMITH: --students at Yale. And so you have [George A.] Kubler, you have [Sumner] Crosby, you have [Charles] Seymour [Jr.], and, to a lesser degree, [George Heard] Hamilton following and--

HELD: Yeah. George Hamilton I'm not so sure-- Frankly, it's something that I have not really been concerned with. I think it's not proper for me here to really talk about something that I'm so little acquainted with and probably have to beg off.

SMITH: No, that's fine. It was a major trend. It has been a major trend within--

HELD: What has it achieved?

SMITH: Well, [laughter] you know, I should ask you that question. My opinions don't count, at least in this context.



HELD: Well, I don't know. I don't know. You have formed an opinion.

SMITH: But that's not important for this. But, at any rate, let me pose another question, because here is an area where there was contention. In the late 1950s, Meyer Schapiro had written his famous essay on style. Then James [S.] Ackerman wrote an important work on style. And George Kubler then wrote a work The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things], which was to attack this concept of style and to propose another way of looking at the history of objects. I'm not asking you to evaluate the three positions--that's not important--but in terms of what-- Those articles and books were written because the authors felt there was a crisis in art history because of an evisceration of theory, that there needed to be a theoretical base given to how art historians functioned. I wonder how you felt, as a practicing art historian and a teacher, about the question of the theoretical base for art history and then the attempts of people like Schapiro and Ackerman and Kubler to address those needs.

HELD: Well, you ask me about something that I have not-- admittedly not--given sufficient thought to give you a personal opinion. I've read Kubler's Shape of Time. I've read it, but I frankly-- Maybe my mind doesn't work that way. It meant very little to me. I know it was very much



admired, but I couldn't do very much with it. As far as I feel, it had no bearing on what I was doing. Maybe one can say--and I would admit that--that I'm too much of a traditionalist to really consider more the theoretical foundations of what I'm doing. I have a feeling that I have to deal with historical objects that belong to a historical time. If I try to reconstruct, to the best of my knowledge, my ability, the framework within which this art grew up and so on, I have to do it with a certain justification, and doing it also making a contribution to our knowledge. Maybe I should have thought more about the philosophical basis for what we were doing, but I somehow felt enough justification, also satisfaction, with the result that I had to feel comfortable.

SMITH: You did not feel that the discipline was in crisis then?

HELD: No. I sometimes feel that it is now in crisis when I read some of the new and latest things. When I feel suddenly that concepts are brought into it which move away from the work of art entirely to areas of economics and-- Let me give you an example. [Erwin] Panofsky has been attacked in the paper by a man who now teaches at Barnard College, a place where I used to teach. He attacked Panofsky and-- Attacking is not the right word. He tried to interpret Panofsky's work on Dürer--and this is really



literally what he said--as the work of a German Jew who had to leave Germany, and because of a sort of unrequited love of German art and tradition, he wrote about Dürer in exile. The Dürer book [Albrecht Dürer] came out actually in the early forties, I think. You see, psychoanalysis comes in--psychology. That's part of the latest development in art history. So this man is totally unaware that Panofsky's first piece, I think even his dissertation, was on Dürer. And a book like the Dürer book could only have been written through a lifelong occupation with the thing. He didn't start working on Dürer after he had been forced, so to speak, to leave Germany and then with this nostalgia of a German Jew that has suddenly begun to get interested in the great figure of German art. He had been interested in Dürer from the very beginning when his career was perfectly safe and he could very well look forward to continued activity in Germany. But this is the kind of psychological, psychologizing art historian. You see now much of this latest art history is trying to analyze the motivations of art historians in themselves.

Then you know that feminism has become a very active branch of modern art history. Now, there's a great deal of justification. I mean, you can look at nineteenth-century French art as a feminist and bring new ideas. That I would consider related, to some extent, to what Schapiro did with



impressionism that I mentioned before. You can get a new slant on French art if you look at it from the point of view of feminist critique of society and patronage and so on. But this again can be driven to extremes that I find sometimes rather ludicrous. So the latest developments in art history that I find unacceptable are meaningless to me personally, because it never leads to the work of art itself. It leads away from the work of art to historical concepts which may or may not have their validity. As an art historian--and as an art historian of the kind that I have been, for better or for worse--I'm ultimately concerned with the works of art. This is what I feel is really missing in much of younger, contemporary activity in the field.

SMITH: What about in terms of after the war, the period of the 1950s and sixties? You returned to Germany frequently, I assume, or at least on a regular basis. Did you not?

HELD: You could say more or less regularly.

SMITH: Did you feel that there was a change that had taken place in the German academic situation?

HELD: Well, I talked sometimes to German art historians, and they always felt that they had been left behind: that they looked now to America, to England, and tried to sort of catch up. But I think there are some younger people in Germany who have done some respectable work. There's Martin



Warnke, for instance, who is a younger man who is doing very interesting work and--

SMITH: Very politically motivated.

HELD: Yeah. That's all right. Yeah. That's all right. But at least it's done on a respectable level. And I have no objection to bias if the scholar still is aware of the critical attitude that one has to take that whatever you say must be based on evidence. We have now the presidential election, and people talk, say things. Then when you ask, "Well, what is the evidence?" then suddenly there is none, you know. [laughter] And so art historians sometimes have written like this, but Warnke, I think, whatever I've read by him seems to be sound and reasoning. There's some intelligence behind it.

SMITH: Did you and your wife [Ingrid-Märta Nordin-Pettersson Held] ever consider returning to Europe?

HELD: Never. Never. No. Absolutely not. No. My wife, of course, was Swedish. I think you know that, don't you?

SMITH: Yes. You could have moved to Sweden.

HELD: In 1940, two years after our first child [Anna Held Audette] was born, I bought a summer place in Vermont, what we called our farm. It still belongs to my children now. I had, from the very beginning, even back in high school-- Didn't I tell you that once I wrote a paper on what I wanted to be? I may have told it to Taina [Rikala]. I found an



old school paper where the teacher had asked me, "What do you want to be?" One of the things I said, "Be an art historian"--that was only fifteen or so--"but if that doesn't work out, I would like to be a farmer." Well, in 1940, I bought the Vermont "farm," farm with quotation marks because we never farmed it. But it's a large piece of land, and I sank sort of my roots in America. My children were born here and every summer we went up to the farm. It's, by the way, very close to where Schapiro would spend his summers. And in 1936 I spent a few weeks, before I was married, in very close contact with Schapiro near his farm in his house in Londonderry [Vermont]. So I felt so tied now to this country that going back to Europe, either Germany or anywhere else, would never seriously cross my mind. I'm still a first-generation American because I'm a naturalized American, but my children-- Do you call the children the first generation? What do we call them?

SMITH: I think they're the second generation.

HELD: They're the second generation. So we established an American family, and Europe, I go there for research. For my Rubens studies, I've always had to travel in Europe.

SMITH: Did you teach there on any kind of--?

HELD: I gave one lecture. I gave one lecture in Munich, auf Deutsch. I gave one in Frankfurt and I gave one in Berlin.



SMITH: All in German?

HELD: Yeah. In German. All in German. Yes, yes. I was invited. For instance, in Berlin I was invited for a lecture-- Well, I forgot: I gave two lectures in Berlin, because there was a Rembrandt symposium in 1969 or 1970, and I was invited to give a talk there. That talk was later published as "Rembrandt and the Spoken Word," which is a chapter--I condensed it for publication--in my book on Rembrandt. You know the book came first out as Rembrandt's "Aristotle" and Other Rembrandt Studies [1969]. And then a few years ago, just about two years ago, it came out as Rembrandt Studies. There were new things that were added, and the "Rembrandt and the Spoken Word" is only in that new edition, the Princeton [University Press] book. Before that was published, I gave it as a lecture in Berlin as a special contribution to the museum. There was a very nice, very large audience that I had in Berlin. And also in Munich I had once a very large audience. The one in Frankfurt was small. But Warnke was there at the Frankfurt lecture. Martin Warnke was there, and I don't even know whether it wasn't he who had suggested that I come and give a lecture.



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